

**SO RUDELY SEPULCHERED: THE 48th NEW YORK VOLUNTEER  
INFANTRY REGIMENT DURING THE CAMPAIGN  
FOR CHARLESTON, JULY 1863**

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

**MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE**  
Military History

by

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## ABSTRACT

SO RUDELY SEPULCHRED: THE 48th NEW YORK VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT DURING THE CAMPAIGN FOR CHARLESTON, JULY 1863 by LCDR Luis M. Evans, USN, 135 pages.

The 48th New York was a Union infantry regiment that served in the Department of the South when it attempted to capture Charleston, South Carolina, during the summer of 1863.

Recognized for its political, strategic, and maritime value, Charleston was targeted by the North early in the war. The Union Army's Department of the South and the Navy's South Atlantic Blockading Squadron were tasked with its capture. Despite their respective attempts to seize the city in mid-1862 and early 1863, Charleston remained firmly in Confederate hands.

In June of 1863, Brigadier General Quincy Gillmore was assigned command of the Department of the South. The new commander believed that in order to capture Charleston, he first had to seize Confederate-held Fort Wagner on the northern end of Morris Island. He claimed that he and his men could take Wagner in less than a week. It would ultimately take them two deadly months.

This thesis details the history of the 48th New York, and its contributions and exploits during this campaign. It also analyzes the profound effect this campaign had upon the spirit and character of the regiment for the remainder of the war.

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This work is dedicated in honor of the brave and God-fearing men of the original 48th New York State Volunteer Regiment. Their unwavering commitment to the code of "Duty, Honor, Country," during this nation's most trying period, serves as a model and lasting example for us all.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

No monument has been erected there; not so much as a sign-board tells the passer by to this day that any event of historic interest occurred upon that spot. . . . Upon that arid, sterile, sandy island, where nothing ever grew before, over the whole area of that bastion which had been so heaped with dead, and there only, there grew a blue flower--a wild species of "forget-me-not" that blooms perennially. He [Palmer] made inquiries as to how the flowers came there, but no one could explain it. Somebody may have sown the seed; but those flowers doubtless sprang from the rich dust of the heroes who were so rudely sepulchered upon that spot--as if the great God, to rebuke the neglect of the Republic, had placed them there a monument. And what could be a nobler one? Marble shafts will crumble, bronze will tarnish with time, granite will wear away with years, but flowers will bloom in their seasons forever.<sup>1</sup>

Private Abraham J. Palmer, Forty-Eighth New York  
*The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York  
State Volunteers, In the War for the Union, 1861-1865*

If one stands on what is now the northern tip of Morris Island and looks out eastward over the sea a short distance, their gaze will fall upon the wartime location of Fort Wagner, a Confederate fortification that guarded Charleston Harbor during the American Civil War. It was there that some of the most desperate and bloody fighting of the war took place. It was also there that countless acts of bravery and many conspicuous deeds of valor were conducted.

However, unlike other existing Civil War locations today, there are no markers, memorials, or physical remnants on site to tell visitors its fate. Nor are there any surviving veterans walking around nearby to tell visitors of the terrible carnage and fighting they witnessed on that spot during the summer of 1863. There are only waves.

Time and nature have taken their toll on Wagner's location, for it now rests underwater. But in a figurative sense, those elements have also eroded our ability to appropriately honor what happened there 137 years ago.

Following the battles, many Northern veterans of the Charleston Campaign returned to see where their lives had once been so imperiled and, in many cases, where they had been irrevocably transformed. They had made the trip to connect with memories, as well as to honor comrades who had been killed during that campaign.<sup>2</sup>

Many veterans came away from these visits full of anger and bitterness because in their estimation, no efforts were being made to recognize their deeds nor honor their fallen comrades. They strongly believed that, at a minimum, a monument befitting the sacrifices and heroism of their dead comrades should be erected near the site.<sup>3</sup> Regrettably, no markers or memorials would ever be placed on or near Fort Wagner during their lifetime.

These veterans also expressed dissatisfaction that not a single Northern account of the campaign had been written to accurately tell their story. There were works available by Confederate veterans and Southern historians to account for what had happened there, but none from the Federal perspective. Additionally, there were many false claims and rumors circulating about what happened at Wagner, and these veterans wanted the truth revealed.<sup>4</sup> Abraham J. Palmer, the official historian of the 48th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and himself a veteran of Fort Wagner, summed up this frustration by writing in the unit's regimental history:

But it is as true as lamentable, that no one has yet attempted to write with any fullness the history of the assault on Fort Wagner. . . . But that it should be reserved for Confederate military writers to first acknowledge a deed of

unexampled valor by Federal soldiers nineteen years after its occurrence, is certainly noteworthy.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike their Confederate counterparts who, both during and after the war, were accustomed to receiving ringing adulation and high recognition from their countrymen following victories, both during and after the war, soldiers and sailors of the North often found themselves wanting for recognition from the people back home. By the summer of 1863, many Northerners had turned sour on the war. To them, there had been too few victories and far too many deaths.

However, at war's end, and despite the general euphoria of victory, there were still few efforts being made to formally recognize the deeds of the armies. This may have stemmed from the fact that the North had simply won the war. In winning, Northerners took a more casual approach when addressing the issue of the war because, in winning, the victory itself spoke for their country's wartime achievements. There was simply nothing left to prove or achieve by spending more time on the issue of the war. Northerners wanted to concentrate on putting the conflict behind them and turning to the issues of a peacetime society. This, of course, did not help the causes of the frustrated and seemingly forgotten Northern veterans of Fort Wagner.

Another factor contributing to the lack of recognition given to the Charleston Campaign was its timing. During the height of the campaign, and shortly before the grand assault on Fort Wagner in July of 1863, the Union had achieved two great victories--Gettysburg and Vicksburg. The victory at Vicksburg had taken over a year to accomplish and had finally reopened the vital Mississippi River to Union transportation and commerce. The victory also confirmed, at long last, the effectiveness of an emerging

Northern general in Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>6</sup> The victory at Gettysburg was in itself newsworthy because it was the first time that the Army of the Potomac had inflicted a major defeat on General Robert E. Lee and his seemingly invincible Army of Northern Virginia.

Newspapers of the period typically took a couple of weeks to distribute news of wartime events to their readers. Therefore, at the time news stories of the attacks on Wagner were breaking, much coverage was still being devoted to the victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg.<sup>7</sup> The details of these glorious victories doubtlessly ended up being far more important and heartfelt to the people of the North than a series of repeated defeats at a small rebel fort in far-away Charleston, South Carolina. However, if these campaigns are intently studied for similarities, the death, carnage, and sacrifice endured at Wagner were no less daunting than those incurred at Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

Eventually, some of the concerns and frustrations of the Northern veterans of Fort Wagner would finally, by the efforts of subsequent generations, be addressed. Plans are being laid to erect markers on Morris Island and surrounding areas to denote the significance of the location, and to honor those who fought and died at Wagner. Additionally, several notable books have been written, and a number of historical television documentaries have been developed detailing the Charleston Campaign. In 1989, a major motion picture entitled *Glory* raised public awareness of the campaign by documenting the development and exploits of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, an all-black unit that fought at Fort Wagner.

Despite these efforts, there is still a lack of understanding of what happened at Fort Wagner. Although written with good intentions, many of the aforementioned

productions have been inaccurate or in their “historical” accounts of the campaign. These works have tended to focus on the emergence of the 54th Massachusetts, and very little else. But, even in attempting to do this, their portrayals remain largely inaccurate.

For example, in the movie *Glory*, we see the regiment gaining entry to the fort *en masse* and fighting their way around inside. Truth differs; the 54th did not scale the parapet or enter the fortification as a unit. Rather, after the fall of its commander, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, on the outer wall of the fort, the unit lost cohesion and broke for the rear through the white troops coming up behind them.<sup>8</sup>

In vaulting the efforts of the 54th over the assault’s other participants, the sacrifices of the other regiments involved have been largely ignored. When an independent observer views or reads these accounts for the first time, he or she easily could get the impression that the fight was really about the 54th Massachusetts. In reality, the preponderance of the Northern fighting force at Wagner was made up of white troops. Thus, objective historians will easily deduce that these “historical” works were most likely written to meet popular sentiment and political agendas, rather than to tell the truth about what really happened at Wagner.

It should be stated that Negro soldiers eventually did make great strides for their own cause and that of the Union during this and other wartime campaigns. The use of Negroes in combat was indeed a novel feature for that period. Prior to the American Civil War, the formation and implementation of black units in combat had never before been tried in this country. By war’s end, the Union army would recruit 178,895 black soldiers into 166 different regiments.<sup>9</sup> They would serve nobly throughout the war and,

their contributions would be linked with aptly, to the eventual success of the Union army in crushing the rebellion.

The Lincoln administration quickly saw the value of the 54th Massachusetts in winning public support for its newly implemented policy of enlisting Negroes to fight. Utilizing the power of the press, the administration played up the story but, in so doing, it set the tone for what, generally, would be most remembered about the fight.<sup>10</sup>

Undoubtedly, the administration's goal had never been to overshadow the sacrifices made by the non-Negro units. Nonetheless, its act of focusing on the contributions of the 54th Massachusetts, when speaking about Fort Wagner, ultimately set the standard. Thus, it can be principally blamed for setting in motion the events, or lack thereof, which made other veterans of Fort Wagner feel left out and under-appreciated.

In the overall scheme of the war, the fights for Morris Island and Fort Wagner were relatively minor. However, the small gains made by the federal troops came at a terrible cost in human life. Approximately 2,000 Federal casualties occurred during the principal engagements on Morris Island on July 10th, 11th, and 18th, 1863.<sup>11</sup>

The 48th New York is one of the lesser-known regiments involved in the fight for Fort Wagner. Yet, it was a key component of the history of that campaign. The regiment helped secure the southern tip of Morris Island during the initial Federal landing on July 10th, and was integral to the Federal grand assault on the evening of July 18th. In fact, of all the Federal regiments involved during the battles for Fort Wagner, the 48th ranks highest in terms of total number of soldiers killed. By war's end, it would rank 17th (out of the all Union regiments) in total number of soldiers killed during its time of

service.<sup>12</sup> Plus, its storied history would show that the 48th New York suffered its greatest sacrifice during the fight for Fort Wagner.

Clearly, the whole story should be told. Not just selected segments of it. This thesis will outline and analyze the roles, exploits and contributions of the 48th New York during the Federal campaign to capture Charleston in July of 1863.

It is not the author's intent to use this work as a political statement, nor is it intended to stir up racial tensions. Rather, it is designed to serve as an honest and objective appraisal of one of the bravest regiments to serve the Union army during the American Civil War. This thesis will serve as a model of how historians and students of the Civil War should study this campaign. Truth is the greatest tribute we can pay all the veterans who heroically served both flags during the War Between the States.

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<sup>1</sup>Abraham J. Palmer, *The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers, In the War for the Union, 1861-1865* (Brooklyn: Veteran Association of the Regiment, 1885), 125-126.

<sup>2</sup>James M. Nichols, *Perry's Saints or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 184-185; Colonel Elbridge J. Copp, *Reminiscences of the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (Nashua, New Hampshire: Colonel Eldridge J. Copp, 1911), 275-283; and Palmer, 125-127.

<sup>3</sup>Palmer, 125-126.

<sup>4</sup>Palmer, 103, 107, 119.

<sup>5</sup>Palmer, 112-113.

<sup>6</sup>Patricia L. Faust, *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 320.

<sup>7</sup>"The Opening of the Mississippi River," *Harper's Weekly*, August 8, 1863, 498; "Vicksburg," 501; "The Battle of Gettysburg," 504-505, 508; and "The Attack on Fort Wagner," 509-510.



<sup>8</sup>E. Milby Burton, *The Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 165.

<sup>9</sup>Introduction by Gregory J. W. Urwin in Luis F. Emilio's *A Brave Black Regiment* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), xx.

<sup>10</sup>*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*, hereafter referred to as *O. R. A.*, Series I, Vol. 28, 210; and Stephen R. Wise, *Gate of Hell* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 117.

<sup>11</sup>Wise, 228-229, 233.

<sup>12</sup>Lieutenant Colonel William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 1861-1865* (Albany, New York: Albany Publishing Company, 1889), 3.

## CHAPTER 2

### "A NEW WEAPON ." THE 48th NEW YORK MUSTERS IN

Indeed, I believe I should not trespass upon the truth, should I venture the statement, as the result of observations extending over more than three years, among troops from all sections of the North and West, that no regiment entered the service of the United States, during the war, which could claim superiority over the 48th, in the character of its officers and enlisted men.<sup>1</sup>

Captain James M. Nichols, Forty-Eighth New York  
*Perry's Saints or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in  
the War of the Rebellion*

The 48th New York State Volunteer Infantry Regiment's road to immortality began in the spring of 1861, immediately following President Abraham Lincoln's initial call for seventy-five thousand men. The idea behind forming the regiment is credited to two New York citizens: Irving M. Avery and William B. Barton, a former member of the famed 7th New York State Militia. Motivated by President Lincoln's call for troops, the two men set about forming a company in support of the Union war effort. They rented a room in the old Montague Hall in Brooklyn and began advertising in earnest for recruits. After receiving more responses than a mere company would allow for, the two decided to continue recruiting to eventually form a regiment.<sup>2</sup>

During their recruiting efforts, the two men were often asked, "Who will command the regiment?" They decided that this vital detail must be settled, not only for recruiting and leadership purposes, but also for organizational and logistical reasons. About that time, a formal announcement was made that the Reverend Dr. James H. Perry,

pastor of the Pacific Street Methodist Episcopal Church and a prominent clergyman in the area, was offering his services to the government as an officer.<sup>3</sup>

Perry, 51, was a strong and imposing man, but he had a kind and noble character. He had attended West Point and, upon the commencement of the Texas rebellion against Mexico, he offered his military services to the Texas Army. He would serve honorably during that war. At the Battle of San Jacinto, however, he suffered through an immense, personal ordeal that eventually caused him to leave the army and convert to the ministry. As powerful a clergyman as he was a soldier, Perry earned a remarkable and widespread reputation as a Christian leader.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Barton and Avery found that they were having great success in finding recruits, but they were experiencing difficulty in caring for the growing number of men signing up to fight with the regiment. Up to this point, they had borne the burden and expense of caring for the men themselves. Now, they needed help. They managed to obtain a few benefactors from the local area. Still, they were unable to accomplish their purpose. Eventually, they found Perry and asked him to command the regiment. Perry agreed, provided that the two men could gather enough recruits to eventually form a regiment. Perry also agreed to help the men find logistical and financial assistance.<sup>5</sup>

Slowly and inexorably, the regiment came together. Barton assumed the position of lieutenant colonel and Avery was officially designated the regiment's quartermaster. On July 24th, 1861, the first recruits of the regiment went into camp near Fort Hamilton, New York. They called it "Camp Wyman," in honor of Mr. Luther B. Wyman, a local man who was an ardent supporter and patron of the regiment.<sup>6</sup> The camp rested near a

grove approximately six miles from the city. It was a rather sparse camp at first, as the regiment had only enough Sibley Tents to distribute one per company.<sup>7</sup>

During that period, a number of other independent companies were forming as well. Upon learning that Perry had agreed to serve as the colonel of the regiment, many of these companies also offered him their services. A number of parents were reluctant to let their sons join the army, due to the many moral contaminations that a military life might offer. However, Perry's reputation and his association with the organization helped erase many of their fears, and soon the ranks of the unit swelled with recruits. Eventually, this was how the regiment would gain its quaint sobriquet, "Perry's Saints."<sup>8</sup>

Officially, the new regiment's title was "The Continental Guard." Perry detailed a delegation, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Barton, to travel to Washington. Its purpose was to receive authority from the War Department to raise the regiment under the authority of the Federal Government, rather than under a particular state. This arrangement would call for the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army to commission the regiment's officers and, in turn, would stipulate that the regiment receives its logistical support and operational direction from the general government.

However, when Governor Edwin Denison Morgan, the "War Governor" of New York State, learned that "The Continental Guard" and other independent units were forming their units within the legitimate boundaries of his state, he dispatched his Adjutant-General to Washington to petition President Lincoln to allow him to use these organizations to meet his own state quota. As state governor, one of Morgan's principal wartime duties was to ensure that the State of New York met its governmental quota of

volunteers. This requirement was based on the proportion of persons in the state to those who could bear arms.

Governor Morgan's delegation petitioned President Lincoln to allow New York State to use "The Continental Guard" and others units forming within the state to meet its volunteer requirements.<sup>9</sup> This permission was granted, and the "The Continental Guard" was advised, via War Department General Order No. 71, dated September 5th, 1861, that when properly officered and organized, the State of New York would render the regiment its official designation and muster it into service.<sup>9</sup>

The companies of the regiment began forming in earnest at this time. Company A was the brainchild of Mr. B. Ryder Corwin of Brooklyn. He began raising a company of soldiers in July of 1861, and he gained most of his recruits by opening a recruiting office in Brooklyn at his own expense. Eventually, with the assistance of Colonel Perry, his efforts would result in the company being the first organized for the regiment and it would be designated Company A. It would also be given the honor of serving as the regiment's initial color company. Louis Lent was appointed the company's captain, and Mr. Corwin accepted the post of first lieutenant. Asa H. Ferguson was detailed to serve as the company's second lieutenant, following his transfer from Company F. The company mustered into service on August 19th.<sup>10</sup>

Company B was mustered into service at Camp Wyman on September 5th, 1861. Edmund R. Travis was selected as its captain, while Nere A. Elfwing, a Swede, was made its first lieutenant. Elfwing was a master swordsman and he would be selected by Perry to provide the officers of the regiment their initial sword training. Theodore C. Vidal was selected as the company's second lieutenant. The bulk of the company's men came from

Peekskill and other vicinities nearby Camp Wyman. When Company B left for war, 40 in number, it was the smallest company of the regiment. The company would later receive additional manpower when the regiment balanced its companies.<sup>11</sup>

Company C was organized and recruited by Captain James Farrell of Brooklyn. First Lieutenant George Macardle of Brooklyn and Second Lieutenant Townsend L. Hatfield of New York rounded out the company's officer cadre. The company was made up of Brooklyn men, and was mustered into service at Camp Wyman on September 10th.<sup>12</sup>

Company D began its storied history when its first commander, Captain Daniel C. Knowles, opened a recruiting office in Trenton, New Jersey on July 24th, 1861. Knowles learned about "The Continental Guard" through an ad that Colonel Perry had placed in *The New York Tribune*. Knowles went to see Perry about the issue of having his company join the regiment. The two men would indeed come together, and it was their combined spiritual backgrounds that attracted the type of soldiers who would eventually serve within this company.

Many of the men were Methodist. Initially known as the "Jersey Company" for the high number of Jerseymen within its ranks, it additionally obtained recruits from Connecticut and New York. Later, it would adopt a more heartfelt sobriquet, "The-Die-No-Mores," from a religious song its members often sang while away at camp or in garrison.

The company was mustered into service on August 21st and due to its superior drilling abilities, was assigned as the left flank company of the regiment. Rounding out its officer corps were First Lieutenant James O. Paxson and Second Lieutenant John

Bodine, a former member of the state militia. Colonel Perry thought so highly of Captain Knowles, that he made it his purpose to recommend Knowles as his successor in command of the regiment upon his, Colonel Perry's, expected promotion to brigadier general.<sup>13</sup>

Company E obtained the preponderance of its members from Brooklyn and New York City, but it also gained recruits from other parts of the state, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. It was mustered into service at Camp Wyman on August 27th. Its Captain, William B. Coan, was the driving force behind the formation of the company. First Lieutenant Frederick Hurst, originally from England, assisted him and so did Second Lieutenant Robert S. Edwards of Brooklyn.<sup>14</sup>

Company F was mustered into the service of the United States on August 31st at Camp Wyman. James M. Green, its initial company commander, had originally served as a private in another New York regiment at war's outbreak. Following his three-month enlistment in that regiment, he came back to Brooklyn where he began making arrangements to form his own company. He would gather men from New York City and Brooklyn, while others would come from other parts of the state, such as Nyack, Katonah, and Schenectady. Like Company B, Company F would leave for war, small in number (45 men), but it would eventually receive additional support from other companies. Rounding out the list of company officers was First Lieutenant Samuel K. Wallace of New York and Henry W. Robinson of Brooklyn.<sup>15</sup>

Company G was organized by a twenty year-old Brooklyn man named Anthony Elmendorf. His proficiency at drill, while serving with another early war regiment, earned him the captaincy of this company. Elmendorf's drill capabilities were so good

that he was assigned the task of teaching the other officers the tactics of the regiment until Colonel Perry himself could assume the duty. A majority of the men came from New York City and Brooklyn, while others came from points along the Hudson River, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Its officers also included First Lieutenant William H. Dunbar and James M. Nichols, both of Brooklyn. The company would muster for Federal service on August 26th.<sup>16</sup>

Company H's entry into the regiment came initially during the summer of 1861, when Colonel Perry visited the drill of a Home Guard Company at Montague Hall. There he witnessed the impressive leadership abilities of a young Brooklyn lawyer by the name of Dudley W. Strickland. Perry was so impressed with Strickland's skills that he immediately offered him command of one of his companies. Strickland agreed, with the provision that he could name his own first lieutenant. This request was granted, and Strickland selected his life-long friend and fellow lawyer William L. Lockwood. Both men had previously served together in a militia outfit in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The two began recruiting men for their new company. They gained candidates principally from Brooklyn, Long Island, and points along the Hudson River. Caleb N. Patterson, the company's second lieutenant, also brought some men that he had recruited from the vicinities of Keyport and Freehold, New Jersey. Company H was one of the first companies of the regiment to muster into Federal service, and it did so on August 16th. Because of Strickland's leadership skills, he was ordered to Camp Wyman to assist with the development of the camp and to help drill the regiment's men. Because of their proficiency at drill, Company H was assigned the position of the regiment's right flank company.<sup>17</sup>



Company I's recruiting office was located in Brooklyn and opened for business on July 19th, 1861. The company's captain Joseph G. Ward with the assistance of a pair of noncommissioned officers, eventually moved the company to Camp Wyman on August 2nd. The company was mustered into Federal service on August 16th, and it became the third company of the regiment to do so. The other officers of the company were First Lieutenant Samuel W. Swartwout and James H. Perry Jr. the son of Colonel Perry.<sup>18</sup>

Company K was principally organized through the efforts of two men, Captain Samuel J. Foster, a former member of the 7th Regiment, New York State Militia, and Second Lieutenant Albert F. Miller of Brooklyn. Company K was made up principally of Brooklyn men. However, First Lieutenant Sylvanus G. Gale of Galesville, New York, brought over a large number of men from that town. It would distinguish itself by being the first company of the regiment to be mustered into Federal service. The date was August 16th, 1861.<sup>19</sup>

The regiment's initial field and staff was organized as follows:

Colonel:	James H. Perry, Sr.
Lieutenant Colonel:	William B. Barton
Major:	Oliver T. Beard
Adjutant:	Anthony W. Goodell
Quartermaster:	Irving M. Avery
Surgeon:	Joseph L. Mulford
Asst. Surgeon:	Patrick H. Humphries
Chaplain:	William P. Strickland, D. D.
Sergeant-Major:	Samuel H. Moser <sup>20</sup>

The regiment spent its days at Camp Wyman, completing its organization, practicing the complexities of drill, and learning military tactics. During this time, Governor Morgan visited the regiment with his staff, which included future U. S.

President Chester A. Arthur. Upon its final muster, the regiment was officially designated--Forty-Eighth Regiment, New York State Volunteers.<sup>21</sup>

On September 15th, the regiment received orders to proceed to Washington. It was anticipated that, from there, they would proceed to the front. On the sixteenth, the regiment packed up its equipment and prepared to depart. On September 17th, 1861, members of the 48th New York bade farewell to families and friends, marched over to Fort Hamilton, boarded steamers, and left for war, 964 soldiers strong.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James M. Nichols, *Perry's Saints or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 26.

<sup>2</sup>Abraham J. Palmer, *The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers, In the War for the Union. 1861-1865* (Brooklyn: Veteran Association of the Regiment, 1885), 1, 8.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 3-6.

<sup>5</sup>Nichols, 26-28.

<sup>6</sup>Nichols, 30-31, 36; Palmer 2-7.

<sup>7</sup>Amasa B. White to wife, September 13, 1861, 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection; William J. Carlton, *Company D, ("The Die-No-Mores") of the Forty-Eighth Regiment, New York State Volunteers, 1861-5* (Privately Printed, 1892), 17; and Palmer, 8.

<sup>8</sup>Palmer, 2-3.

<sup>9</sup>Carlton, 5-6; Palmer, 1, 6-7; Nichols, 25; U.S. War Department *General Order No. 71* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1861).

<sup>10</sup>Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865* (Albany, New York: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912), 2357; C. E. Dornbusch, *The Communities of New York and the Civil War, The Recruiting Areas of the New York Civil War Regiments* (New York: New York Public Library, 1962), 18; and Palmer, 7, 200-201.

- <sup>11</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 18, 29; and Palmer, 7, 204.
- <sup>12</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 18; and Palmer, 7, 205.
- <sup>13</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 31; Carlton, 5-8; and Palmer, 7, 206.
- <sup>14</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 18, 20, 31; and Palmer, 7, 208-209.
- <sup>15</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 18, 20; and Palmer, 7, 210.
- <sup>16</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 18; and Palmer, 7, 211.
- <sup>17</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 18, 31; and Palmer, 7, 212-213.
- <sup>18</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 18; and Palmer, 7, 214-215.
- <sup>19</sup>Phisterer, 2357; Dornbusch, 18; and Palmer, 7, 216.
- <sup>20</sup>Palmer, 9, 247-248; and Nichols, 36.
- <sup>21</sup>Palmer, 7-8; and Nichols, 25, 34-35.
- <sup>22</sup>Palmer, 9; and Nichols, 34, 36, 38.

## CHAPTER 3

### EARLY WAR EXPERIENCES FOR PERRY'S SAINTS

Sir, we all belong to the color guard to-night. We are but a remnant of that long line that filed down by Fort Hamilton that midnight hour twenty years ago to take the steamer for the South and destiny. Many of those noble hearts, sons of this great city, are sleeping in Southern graves.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Daniel C. Knowles, Forty-Eighth New York  
*The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York  
State Volunteers, In the War for the Union, 1861-1865*

The long roll announcing the start of the war for the 48th New York came at two o'clock in the morning of September 17th, 1861. The men quickly fell in with their knapsacks, haversacks, and canteens, but without rifles. Those would be given to the men once they were safely aboard the transport vessel *John Potter*. At the time the final order to march was given to the regiment, Colonel Perry was in town preaching a sermon at a local church. Upon learning that the regiment was preparing to leave, he ended his sermon and started towards his men. Once loaded, the ship set sail from the dock at Fort Hamilton and passed through the Staten Island Sound. It eventually arrived in South Amboy, New Jersey.<sup>2</sup>

Upon disembarking, the regiment proceeded on foot to the nearby railway station where it caught the train to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A number of the men in the regiment were from New Jersey, and a number of their friends and families came out to greet them as the train stopped at stations en route to Philadelphia. Some were given gifts and food items to take with them on their journey. Upon arriving in Philadelphia, the regiment was rendered a warm and gracious welcome by the townspeople. Since the start of the war, it had been customary by the people of Philadelphia to provide a meal to

each passing regiment. The 48th's meal was received at the Cooper Shop Refreshment Saloon.<sup>3</sup>

Following the meal, the regiment boarded the train again and set out for Washington, D. C. En route, they would stop in Baltimore, Maryland, and have to change trains at separate train stations. Maryland was a border state during the war. However, it leaned favorably towards the Southern cause. Arriving in hot-blooded Baltimore, the men changed trains with loaded rifles and full cartridge boxes. This was done to deter any violent intentions the townspeople might have towards the regiment. Other than being offered a bogus meal invitation, the regiment suffered no significant incidents while in the city.<sup>4</sup>

The regiment arrived in Washington at six o'clock on the eve of the eighteenth and set up camp. The following day, it received temporary shelter in a large brick building near Willard's Hotel and received its rations from the Soldiers Retreat. Shortly after, the regiment set up camp on the plain at the rear of Capital Hill. Due to initial confusion regarding the assigned location of the regiment's camp, the men ended up sleeping without tents. This was just a foretaste of how war would be for the 48th.<sup>5</sup>

Once settled in this location, the men began to feel as if they were finally at the front. They got the chance to see Mr. Lincoln while he inspected a nearby cavalry regiment. In a few days, the regiment moved to a location nearer to their assigned brigade. From September 20th until October 5th, the regiment spent the bulk of its time drilling and completing its organization. Due to its high standards and superb leadership, the regiment was deemed the best in the brigade.<sup>6</sup>

Besides drilling and preparing for battle, the regiment speculated on where it was headed. Eventually, it learned that their brigade was being considered as part of an expeditionary corps that would travel into the Deep South under General Thomas W. Sherman. But as yet, this was uncertain. At noon on October 5th, the regiment packed up camp and left Washington for Annapolis, Maryland. During this movement, it was deduced that the regiment was, indeed, headed toward the heart of the rebellion.<sup>7</sup>

The regiment arrived in Annapolis in a driving storm near midnight. They found Federal troops guarding all of the Federal property there, as well as the rail junction and the key roads in and out of the city. They were once again in Maryland, and the regiment found out that it did not have the popular support there. Colonel Perry had a contentious discussion with local officials on where he could billet his regiment. Eventually, the 48th found shelter in some deserted buildings at nearby St. John's College.<sup>8</sup>

The next morning the regiment was offered rations by the Third New Hampshire Volunteers. The Third had made their camp on the campus of the United States Naval Academy. The 48th took up the offer, and later set up their camp in the rear of the Academy's buildings. The 48th bivouacked immediately next to the 47th New York, a regiment with whom they would share many future wartime experiences. Orders for all the Federals in camp were very strict due to the high tensions between the Federal Government and the State of Maryland. Thus, no one was permitted out of camp without special permission.<sup>9</sup>

Eventually, word spread amongst the local populace that the famous Colonel Perry was in their fair city. Due to his high reputation as a man of God, their manner towards the regiment dramatically changed to a more positive tone. Summarily, the

colonel was asked if he would deliver a sermon at the local Methodist church. It proved to be the last sermon he would ever preach from a pulpit. Additionally, the officers of the regiment were made the special guests at a couple of social gatherings hosted by Governor Hicks of Maryland and Judge Brewer.<sup>10</sup>

On the 12th of October, the regiment was formed up in camp and presented a stand of colors by Mrs. Egbert L. Viele, the wife of their brigade commander. Following the presentation, Governor Hicks gave a presentation speech that was answered in kind by Colonel Perry. Little did the regiment know that this very flag would be shot to shreds during the assault for Fort Wagner.<sup>11</sup>

On the 18th, the regiment broke camp at Annapolis and boarded the steamer *Mayflower*. It transported them several miles to another waiting vessel, the *Empire City*, which, on the 21st, set sail for Fortress Monroe. General Sherman's expeditionary force was ordered to rendezvous at the fort, which rested inside the mouth of Hampton Roads. The expedition was to be the grandest maritime force to have ever assembled under the American flag. It would number over fifty war vessels and transports, along with twenty-five coaling ships. The land portion of the expedition would be organized into three full brigades and several supporting forces. The fleet would ultimately carry 12, 653 soldiers. The land forces came under the command of General Sherman, while the naval forces fell under the command of Captain Samuel F. Dupont.<sup>12</sup>

The 48th New York fell in with First Brigade, which was detailed as follows:

First Brigade  
Brigadier General Egbert L. Viele

Eighth Maine, Colonel Lee Strickland  
Third New Hampshire, Colonel Enoch Q. Fellows

Forty-Sixth New York, Colonel Rudolph Rosa  
Forty-Seventh New York, Colonel Henry Moore  
Forty-Eighth New York, Colonel James H. Perry<sup>13</sup>

At Fortress Monroe, the regiment remained aboard ship. The bulk of the regiment stayed aboard the *Empire City*, while a part of Company C was sent to the *Belvidere* and Companies K and B were transferred to the *Matanzas*. During this time, preparations were made for the expedition. Little was said regarding the expedition's destination, but it was speculated that a forced landing was involved. Nonetheless, details of the expedition remained shrouded in mystery for security's sake.<sup>14</sup>

They were still shrouded in secrecy when the fleet set sail on October 29th. The ships sailed out of Hampton Roads in three parallel lines, and once at sea, the fleet turned southward. The ride proved trying for many of the men of the 48th New York. The space allotted each man was filthy, small and uncomfortable. Combined with the rolling sea and fetid air of the ship, many of the men became seasick.

A massive gale blew up as the fleet reached Cape Hatteras. It lasted for several days. The storm not only made shipboard conditions worse for all hands aboard, but it also sank four other transports, and forced many vessels to head back to Hampton Roads. One was the *Belvidere* with the detachment from Company C aboard. The storm caused a dozen deaths within the fleet.<sup>15</sup>

The weather scattered and broke the fleet. During the expedition's planning, a contingency had been devised should the fleet encounter such catastrophic weather conditions. Each ship would carry a set of sealed orders that detailed the intended point of rendezvous and mission of the force and, it was to be opened by each ship's captain



should his vessel become separated from the main force. From this action, the 48th New York learned that it was headed to Port Royal Harbor on the coast of South Carolina.<sup>16</sup>

Eventually, the storm subsided and, on November 4th, the remaining members of the fleet assembled off the bar at Port Royal. Soundings were made and the outer harbor was buoyed. The next day, the naval vessels moved over the bar and drove off the Confederate fleet under the command of Commodore Tatnall. With the dangers of the sea behind them, the men of the 48th New York now faced the dangers of landing in a hostile environment. Guarding the entrance to Port Royal Harbor were two formidable Rebel forts. On the northern edge stood Fort Beauregard, while on the southern end of the harbor's entrance lay Fort Walker. The Federal plan was for the naval vessels to sail line astern into the breach between the two forts and thence sail in an elliptical pattern between the two fortresses. This plan gave the Federals the ability to fire at each fort as it passed by. However, due to weather, the attack was deferred until ten o'clock on the morning of November 7th.<sup>17</sup>

When the fight commenced, members of the 48th were aboard their transports, about five miles away. From there, they beheld a grand view of the battle. They watched and cheered as the battle raged. Eventually, in the early afternoon, the Confederate forts were silenced and subsequently abandoned. The Federals had won an important strategic and moral victory. They now held an important foothold on the Southern coast, which would serve as a launching point for future Federal operations. Port Royal would also serve as an important deep-water port for naval operations. The door to Charleston was now slightly open and the 48th New York was eager to set foot on Southern soil for the first time.<sup>18</sup>

The regiment's right wing was first to land on Hilton Head Island on November 9th, followed by the left wing the following morning. The landings were made separately due to the lack of available transportation on the ninth. Once ashore, the regiment marched a half-mile inland and remained there until its camp was located. The camp was in the midst of a cotton field near general headquarters. The men slept without tents for two nights on account of the difficulty and delay in landing baggage from the transports.<sup>19</sup>

Life for the 48th was busy. Parties regularly scouted the island to "confiscate" supplies and food items. Items found were divided amongst the companies. Drill was conducted daily by company, by battalion, and sometimes by brigade. Once again, due to the knowledge and proficiency of the regiment's leadership, the 48th New York was regarded as one of, if not the best in the department. Dress parade was held once a day, but most of the men's daily hours were consumed with fatigue duty. They were used as laborers to help build earthworks and fortifications around the island. With all regiments pitching in, a wharf and sizable town were soon erected.<sup>20</sup>

On November 24th, Generals Sherman and Viele came over to inspect the regiment. The regiment marched and drilled and, afterwards, General Viele commented that, in his estimation, the regiment marched as well as regulars, and was equal to any in the service.<sup>21</sup>

Day after day, the regiment's time on Hilton Head Island was essentially the same—fatigue duty and drill. Occasionally, the men found a break by taking visits around the island, or conducting impromptu raids on the sutler wagon in return for his over charging the men. Thanksgiving and Christmas came and passed with little fanfare.

It was a slow period of sorts, but the men made up for the boredom and routine by getting to know one another, and reminiscing about loved ones back home. A member of Company D adopted a dog, and subsequently named it "Jeff," short for Jefferson Davis. It would become the company mascot.<sup>22</sup>

To this point, death for the 48th New York had come not from Rebel shells, but from accidents and diseases, such as measles and small pox.<sup>23</sup>

Early on the last day of 1861, rumors circulated of an impending movement. It was beginning to appear that the regiment might get its first taste of real combat. The regiment was summarily put on notice to be ready to march with a number of days cooked rations. Near noon, the 48th started for the dock at Hilton Head. The men learned that the expedition they were embarking on was a joint effort, the army side under the command of General Isaac I. Stevens from Second Brigade, and the naval side under the command of Commander C. R. P. Rogers. The 48th New York and its sister regiment, the 47th New York, were included with the regular troops of Stephens' command. By mid-afternoon all were aboard the steam transport *Delaware* and making their way up the Broad River towards Beaufort.<sup>24</sup>

The Federal force consisted of seven regiments of troops (including the 47th and 48th New York regiments), four gunboats, a ferryboat, and four large launches that each carried a twelve-pound howitzer. Colonel Perry was put in charge of the reserve element that consisted of the two regiments (47th and 48th New York) from Viele's (First) Brigade. That evening, the flotilla anchored off Beaufort, which had been under Federal control shortly after the capture of Port Royal Sound. The following morning, the force got underway once again.<sup>25</sup>

The purpose of the expedition was to drive the only known Confederate resistance in the Sea Island District from its principal location near the Coosaw River. This was a wide tidal river that separated Beaufort and Port Royal Island from the mainland. The Rebels were located at a place known as Port Royal Ferry, which guarded a point along the Coosaw River where the main thoroughfare from Beaufort to Charleston crossed. The thoroughfare was known as the "Shell Road." The marshes that surrounded the area along the northern tier of Port Royal Island limited travel north to Charleston to this one road. Therefore, the Federals deemed it vital for further operations inland.<sup>26</sup>

The force landed near the ferry at Adams cotton plantation. While disembarking, the men of the 48th New York watched the troops already disembarked chase the confederate pickets inland. Naval gunboats were all the while throwing shells at the enemy to cover the landing. Once on land, the 48th formed up with the 47th and marched forward under the command of Colonel Perry. The original plan called for the two regiments to act as a reserve and eventually, intercept the Confederates' retreat.<sup>27</sup>

However, after advancing only three-quarters of a mile, the two regiments were ordered to advance at the double-quick. They were then notified of a battery on the right that was in a position to rake the right flank of the main Federal line. The two units were formed into double line of battle and advanced towards the suspected battery. Entering a wood, the formations were halted and two companies of skirmishers were thrown out to find the battery and report its strength.<sup>28</sup>

Upon receiving word of the enemy's location and strength, Colonel Perry split the force, leaving the 48th in a position to attack the four-gun battery from the front while the 47th moved off to the right through woods to attack the battery from its left and rear

flank. While this was being coordinated, men of the 48th were heavily fired upon. They were ordered to lie down amongst rows of corn until the flank attack could commence. The 47th had just begun to skirmish with the battery when orders were received to abandon the attack, as the main battery nearer the river had been captured and destroyed.<sup>29</sup>

The regiment established camp that evening on the battlefield, all the while standing guard in case the Rebels decided to return. It was a bitterly cold night, and the men shivered as they were not allowed to start fires. Nor did they have warm clothing to protect against the chilled air. The next morning the regiment re-embarked for the trip back to Hilton Head, as the object of the expedition had been accomplished. The 47th New York suffered no casualties during the affair, while the 48th suffered three wounded and none killed. The 48th New York had experienced its first taste of combat – while serving as a support element to a secondary effort.<sup>30</sup>

Back at Hilton Head, on January 12th, Adjutant Goodall presented a set of colors, consisting of a regimental flag and two markers to the regiment. The flags came from the ladies of Hanson Place Methodist-Episcopal Church of Brooklyn, where Colonel Perry had been pastor.<sup>31</sup>

On January 25th, the regiment broke camp and marched to Seabrook's Landing, a plantation-turned-military-camp, located on the other edge of Hilton Head Island. The regiment was being sent to Dawfuskie Island, bordering the Savannah River to the north, and approximately four miles above Fort Pulaski. Built before the war, Fort Pulaski was a large masonry fort located on Cockspur Island in the middle of the Savannah River east of the city. Confederates had seized the fort from the Federals at the start of hostilities.

A Federal effort was now underway to reduce and retake the fort, and the 48th New York would soon find itself playing an interesting, yet taxing role in its reduction.<sup>32</sup>

After spending the night at Seabrook's, the regiment embarked on the steamer *Winfield Scott* and proceeded to a place on Dawfuskie called Hay's Point. En route to that location, Corporal Dewitt C. Dutcher of Company A sleepwalked over the side of the ship and was drowned. He became the eighth death in the 48th since the regiment had left Camp Wyman. When the steamer arrived, five companies (one wing) were disembarked at 9 p.m. under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Barton. That wing started for the other side of the island and, three wearisome hours later, the group arrived at Dunn's Plantation on the bank of the river. The next day was spent foraging for food and supplies, as well as settling into the accommodations of the plantation.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, the wing still aboard *Winfield Scott* now found itself in an unfortunate situation. The ship had become stuck on an oyster bed shoal that protruded from Long Pine Island through "Pull-and-be-damned" creek. As the tide went down, the ship broke in the middle and, thus, left the men stranded on that barren sea island. Fortunately, there were twenty days rations aboard the ship and all were saved. The men had to await a new vessel to rescue them and to pass the time, they found entertainment amongst the local wildlife. A goat was located and adopted as the regimental pet.<sup>34</sup>

Eventually, the steamer *Mayflower* arrived to pick up the shipwrecked members of the regiment, and it transferred them and the regiment's supplies and luggage to Dawfuskie Island at a point known as Cooper's Landing. The wing remained in that location until February 1st when it joined the other wing at Dunn's Plantation. A fine, permanent camp was erected near a wood and back from the river. During this time, the

regiment was mostly idle. Dawfuskie was a beautiful spot and the men spent much of their off-duty time taking in the sights, sounds and pleasant aromas of the island.

Lieutenant Bodine of Company D was detailed as the island's provost marshal.<sup>35</sup>

While the regiment stood in comparative idleness, active and aggressive operations were going on all around it. Preparations were being conducted in support of the planned reduction of Fort Pulaski. Up to now, the only participation by the 48th in these endeavors came from Major Beard, who had been assigned to lead the effort in removing obstructions the Confederates had placed in Wall's Cut, an artificial channel that connected New and Wright Rivers. One night, as the officers of the regiment sat near the fire, Major Beard arrived in camp with Captain Quincy A. Gillmore. Gillmore was the officer in charge of the reduction of Fort Pulaski. The officers listened attentively as Gillmore summarized the work that had been done thus far in the campaign, and what projects still lay ahead. Little did officers of the 48th know how intimately this project would play in their immediate future.<sup>36</sup>

It was determined that the Federals needed to establish batteries on Jones' and Bird's Islands to cut off communications, supplies and reinforcements between Confederate-held Fort Pulaski and Savannah. These islands lay opposite one another in the Savannah River and were essentially two flat marshlands that were covered twice daily by the rising tide. Materials to build these batteries were to be prepared by the engineers. The job of the 48th New York, as well as a portion of the 7th Connecticut, was to carry these materials from the woods to the docks for further transportation to the islands.<sup>37</sup>

Specifically, the men were to carry approximately 10,000 logs from Dawfuskie Island down to the river shore. The logs were cut into approximately ten to fifteen foot lengths and were three to six inches in diameter. They were to be carried from anywhere between three-quarters of a mile, to a mile-and-a-half in distance to the water's edge. From there, the logs were to be placed aboard awaiting boats and transferred to Jones Island. Eventually, the logs would be used to build a causeway for the placement of heavy cannons to be used for the assault.<sup>38</sup>

To say this work was extremely difficult would be an understatement. The men found themselves taxed while transporting the heavy and unwieldy logs to their destinations. The only soldiers from the regiment exempt from this duty were the musicians, who remained behind to practice their music, guard the camp, and hold dress parade.<sup>39</sup> The islands themselves were made of a gelatinous mud, ranging from four to twelve feet in depth. A matted sea grass covered the surface of the mud. It was an extremely difficult task to cooperatively carry logs and walk over such difficult terrain. The men often sank up to their knees in the mud. Following the laying of logs and planks that formed the causeways, the men were utilized in the placement of the guns themselves. Occasionally, a gun would slip into the mud, and a Herculean effort was required to extract it. The work was even more difficult because it was performed at night so that the Rebels would not suspect anything.<sup>40</sup>

Periodically, a Confederate vessel would venture near the work. On one occasion, a steamer came down the river and stopped directly opposite the men. Work was halted and the Rebels that were topside the vessel could be clearly seen by the workers now hiding amongst the canes. The officers aboard the vessel scanned the area



with binoculars as if they knew something was going on. However, a short time later, the steamer was again proceeding down the river towards Fort Pulaski. Many reconnaissances were made up the river to ascertain if Confederate batteries were being built nearby, as well as to investigate why Rebel boats kept venturing to a point near their work.<sup>41</sup>

The work was long and grueling, and so, too, were the conditions. Many of the men succumbed to the hard labor and were stricken with malaria and other diseases associated with the mud and marsh. Whiskey and quinine proved powerless over the diseases and a number of men perished. But, despite the many hardships and hazards involved, the batteries were eventually placed. The greatest amount of effort in putting them in place came from the men of the 48th New York. The battery on Jones' Island would become known as "Battery Vulcan," and the battery on Bird's Island was called "Battery Hamilton."<sup>42</sup>

During this time, a humorous event occurred involving the 48th New York. The story soon became folklore throughout the Federal Army. It began in the middle of March when two Confederate deserters came into the brigade and reported that an ironclad vessel was being constructed in Savannah. The vessel's supposed purpose was to come down the river, disgorge troops and capture the Federal fortifications that lay along the river's banks. Once this was accomplished, the Rebels would then possess an open route for the relief of Fort Pulaski. Reports corroborated the existence of such a vessel and plans were laid on how to thwart it.

It was supposed that the vessel would be low-lying, and have sides of sloping iron. It would most likely steam down the river, anchor opposite the Federal batteries,

and open fire on them. Prior to firing, it would disgorge troops who would assist in taking the Federal positions. Thus, the key to foiling the attack was in capturing or destroying the vessel itself.

A scheme was devised incorporating six common rowboats, each possessing six oarsmen, six soldiers, and an officer. The plan called for three of the boats to approach the vessel from one side while the other three approached from the other. The soldiers would be armed with revolvers, hand grenades, cold chisels and sledgehammers. Once alongside the behemoth, the plan called for the soldiers to jump aboard the vessel using grappling irons and ropes. Onboard, the soldiers would throw hand grenades into the gun ports to neutralize the gunners. The troops would then use cold chisels and sledge hammers to cut through the roof and gain entry to the ship. The men would then capture the crew and, subsequently, the vessel.

Soon, teams were made up from men of the regiment, and they rehearsed their duties in preparation for the pending attack. They realized that the vessel could easily turn and take the boarders back to Savannah, and eventual captivity. To counter this possibility, a new plan was devised to cut into the ship's smokestack, drop down a large bomb into the steam plant and blow the vessel up that way. Subsequently, bombs were provided to each rowboat.

In either case, it was a dangerous and difficult mission. Despite it's perils however, many men volunteered for the mission. Legend has it that when the colonel of the 48th asked for volunteers from his so called "sacred flock," he stated: "Now men, you've been in this cursed swamp for two weeks, up to your ears in mud--no fun, no glory and blessed poor pay. Here's a chance. Let every man who has had experience as

a cracksman or a safe blower step to the front.” To the last man, the regiment rolled forward four paces and came expectantly to attention.

Eventually the plan was abandoned, since it was learned that no such vessel existed. The tidy little group of men from the 48th New York involved in this madcap plan eventually became known throughout the regiment, department, and the army as the “Cold Chisel Brigade.”<sup>43</sup>

During the time the 48th was busy working on the batteries on the mud islands, Captain Gillmore had been successful in erecting other batteries on Tybee Island. By the 9th of April, Gillmore had eleven batteries erected there that mounted thirty six guns. On March 31st, Major General David Hunter relieved General Thomas W. Sherman of command of the Department of the South. On April 10th, Hunter sent a summons to Colonel Charles H. Olmstead, Confederate commander at Fort Pulaski, to surrender the fort. Olmstead refused.<sup>44</sup>

At 8:15 a.m., firing commenced, and for the next thirty hours the batteries surrounding the fort fired heavily at the masonry structure. The shots breached the walls in numerous locations. Olmstead was compelled to surrender the fortress thirty hours later, when Federal shots hit the powder magazine’s walls. The men of the 48th watched the bombardment from the bank in front of the camp on Dawfuskie Island. It was a grand spectacle for them, and the batteries on Bird’s and Jones’ Islands fired in concert with the batteries on Tybee. Soon after its surrender, the officers of the regiment were allowed to visit the fort.<sup>45</sup>

Following the surrender of Fort Pulaski, the 48th New York remained in camp on Dawfuskie Island to rest after their arduous labor in building the batteries. Many of the

men were ill with malarial fevers, but most recovered over time, and especially after getting good rest in the clearer, springtime air. A detachment made up of several companies was sent over to Cooper's Landing and other points on the island to establish guard postings. The regiment spent its remaining time on the island conducting drill and dress parade, standing guard, receiving mail and pay, and resting.<sup>46</sup>

By mid-May, it became evident that new movements were afoot in the department. The other regiments on Dawfuskie were gradually withdrawn and the 48th was still unaware of its next assignment. On May 23rd, the regiment received orders to proceed to Fort Pulaski to garrison the fort. The officers and men were greatly indignant upon hearing word of this order. On May 25th, seven companies of the regiment marched down to Cooper's Landing and boarded the steamers *Delaware* and *Mattano* for the two-hour journey to the fort. The *Delaware* remained anchored overnight and left for the fort the next day. Companies E, B, and C remained behind on the island to stand picket duty under Captain Coan. Less than a week later, the three companies rejoined the regiment at Fort Pulaski.<sup>47</sup>

When the 48th New York arrived at the fort, Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry met the regiment at the dock. Terry, who would be the regiment's future corps commander later in the war, directed the 48th to set up camp outside the fort. The weather was windy, damp, and miserable, and it was nearly dark when all the men had their tents erected. It would be several days before the regiment would officially replace the 7th Connecticut inside as the fort's garrison. Company K was detailed to occupy the hulk of an old vessel that was anchored in the channel opposite the fort. Come June 2nd,

the regiment was billeted by company in the fort's casemates, where they had erected bunks by the sides of the cannon.<sup>48</sup>

The fort required a lot of repairs, and most of the regiment's time was spent fixing it up. When completely repaired, it looked better than it had in years. Eventually, Company G of the 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery and a detachment of the 1st New York Engineers joined the 48th as the fort's garrison. The Rhode Islanders taught the men of the 48th how to load and fire the cannons, and Perry's Saints became excellent artillerymen.

Life fell into routine for the 48th. Days were a succession of drill, inspections, guard duty, dress parade, target practice, fatigue duty, and church services. Funerals were held for men who died while in garrison. A signal station was erected on the parapet, and messages were sent to, and received from, the Federals located at Braddock's Point. Uniforms had to be kept proper at all times. Despite the stifling heat, the men were expected to fall in for dress parade in frock coats with white gloves and polished brass.<sup>49</sup>

On the 16th and 17th of June, a terrible storm broke along the coast. During the height of the storm, a sutler's schooner came ashore on the west end of Cockspur Island. The crew was rescued, but the vessel was a loss. Cargo floated ashore on Tybee and Cockspur Islands. Cases of claret and champagne, and barrels of beer and wine were salvaged and consumed by many of the men.

Thus, on the 17th, the regiment was found to be in a terrible state. Colonel Perry was greatly mortified by this and he enacted strict punishment for the culprits. Many of the men were locked in the guardhouse and some, after becoming too rowdy, were

confined inside the dungeon. The liquor was collected and locked away, and comparative order was restored. However, the stress and vexation from the incident proved too much for Colonel Perry and at 3 o'clock on the afternoon of June 18th, he was struck down with apoplexy. Within 10 minutes of the attack, he was dead.<sup>50</sup>

Colonel Perry's death was a blow to the regiment. He had been a strong and dependable leader and his loss was deeply felt. The next day at 11 a.m., a viewing was held for the entire regiment. Perry was laid out in his dress uniform and partially covered by the Stars and Stripes. As the men filed by the dead colonel's body, the regimental band played a series of hymns. It was intended that Perry's body be immediately sent back to New York. However, due to delays in getting his body shipped, he was buried in the forenoon the following day outside the fort. A military funeral was held, and the regiment fired a salute over his grave. His remains were eventually returned to New York and he was buried at Cypress Hills Cemetery in Brooklyn.<sup>51</sup>

Colonel Perry's death shook the upper tier of leadership in the regiment. Promotion to colonel naturally belonged to Lieutenant Colonel Barton. However, Major Beard had performed a great amount of service to the regiment and the department. Beard still, lacked the full confidence of his fellow officers and his promotion over Barton would have set a bad precedent. A meeting was held amongst the officers to determine who should next command the regiment. The feeling was unanimous that Barton should be given command. A paper was drawn up requesting that the governor accept their recommendation.

Captain Nichols and Lieutenant Colonel Barton escorted the paper and other associated documents to New York, and Barton was designated as the next colonel of the

regiment. Nichols remained in New York to assist Captain Farrell with the recruitment of new soldiers for the regiment. The pair returned to the regiment on October 2nd.<sup>52</sup>

The change in colonelcy also brought about changes in the regiment's leadership. Major Beard was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and Captain Green, from Company F, was promoted to Major. Lieutenant Samuel M. Swartwout assumed command of Company F. Additionally, Captain Knowles of Company D (also commander of the "Cold Chisel Brigade") resigned his commission in July, due to poor health from his work on the mud islands. Lieutenant James O. Paxson ascended to captaincy of that company. Captain Travis of Company B resigned in August (serving later in the artillery), and was replaced by Lieutenant Elfwing. Other less notable changes occurred within the officer ranks as well.<sup>53</sup>

The regiment spent the remainder of the summer mainly in its monotonous routine of maintaining and protecting the fort, as well as guarding the river approaches to Savannah. On July 4th, an Independence Day celebration was held and at noon, thirty-four guns (one for each state of the Union) were fired in a national salute. The guns saluting at Hilton Head were heard at the fort, 70 miles distant. In the evening, fireworks entertained the men.

There were moments of excitement, too. Rebel troops were sometimes seen on nearby islands, and the fort's cannon were fired at them. Periodically, a Rebel vessel would steam down the river from Savannah and attempt to run the gauntlet past the fort. Shots would be fired and the vessel would head back to port. On one occasion, a steamer came down under a flag of truce and transferred federal prisoners of war to the fort's garrison. On August 10th, a steamer from Savannah was fired upon and surrendered to

the fort. On it were a number of officers, a woman, and a small boy. It was rumored that the woman was a spy.<sup>54</sup>

On July 19th, Company I was detailed to nearby Tybee Island where it stood picket duty and operated a battery of artillery at the Martello Tower that guarded the channel entrance of the Savannah River. On the 4th of August, the battery fired upon the blockade-runner *Ladona*, as she attempted to run past the battery into Savannah. The vessel was laden with stores and contraband of war for the Rebels. The battery succeeded in disabling the vessel, and the U. S. Gunboat *Unadilla* captured it. The company received a congratulatory letter from General Hunter for this service and from that point on, Company I was permanently assigned to Tybee Island.<sup>55</sup>

Occasionally, opportunities arose for the men at Fort Pulaski to venture outside the fort's confines. Sight seeing excursions were made up the river to visit neighboring islands. A number of armed expeditions also occurred. On September 24th, 1862, Colonel Barton led an expedition up Skull Creek, South Carolina to raid an enemy cavalry post opposite the northwest end of Pinckney Island. The troopers had been harassing Federal troops on Hilton Head for some time, and General Hunter wanted them dispatched.

Taking thirty-five men under the immediate command of Lieutenant Miller, plus a detachment of Company G of the 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, the force boarded the steamer *Planter* and steamed up Calibogue Sound to Skull Creek. As the *Planter* neared the outpost, the cavalymen saw the force approaching and most of them fled. Barton ordered the artillerymen to shell the remaining men as the steamer drew closer to the camp. The shelling drove off the remaining Rebels, and the force was subsequently



landed. Numerous articles from the Rebel camp were confiscated, including weapons, ammunition, rations, cavalry equipment and clothing. The expedition returned to Fort Pulaski and no injuries were sustained.<sup>56</sup>

Two armed expeditions were made to the vicinity of Bluffton, South Carolina, during the summer and fall of 1862. Bluffton was a quaint summer resort for the wealthier people of Charleston, Savannah and the sea-islands. It sat on the bank of the May River, and had a number of luxurious homes and bathing houses within it. However, because Confederate troops were using the town and its surrounding areas as a base of operations, Federal commanders deemed it necessary to send a series of expeditions against it.

The first expedition was dispatched on September 30th for the immediate purpose of destroying the salt works at Crowell's Plantation and Gadsden's Bluff. Five companies of the 48th, and a detachment from Company G of the 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery were loaded on the steamers *Planter* and *Starlight*. Steaming up the May River, the force landed near Bluffton. The force found the town deserted and pushed further up along the river towards Crowell's Plantation.

Just past the town, the expedition encountered a force of approximately 200 Rebel cavalry and infantrymen and engaged them. A sharp fight ensued and the Rebels were eventually driven off. One man of the 48th was wounded, but it was thought that the enemy suffered heavily. The expedition then pressed on to Crowell's Plantation and destroyed its salt works. Returning to Bluffton, and prior to boarding the steamers for the return trip to Fort Pulaski, the regiment "liberated" numerous household items from several of the deserted homes.<sup>57</sup>

The second expedition on October 18th, 1862, saw the regiment sending Company B, under Lieutenant Elfwing, and a detachment of the 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, under Captain Gould, back to Crowell's Plantation on the *Planter* to pick up a scout and finish the destruction of the area's salt works. Following the pick-up, the vessel stopped at Bluffton to pick up a boat and learn of the enemy's location.

The landing party accomplished their tasking, and learned in the process that a company of Rebel cavalry had been in the town earlier that day. The landing party returned to the *Planter* and it cast off to return to the fort. While passing Kirk's Bluff, a concealed force of Rebels opened fire on the vessel. Both infantry and artillery on board the steamer immediately returned the fire. Barton ordered the ship to turn around and commence another attack on the Confederate force. The ship hurled grape shot and canister fire on the Rebels as it withdrew from its position.

Although the expedition managed to drive off the force and complete its missions, it came at a cost. The detachment suffered four wounded. One of the them, Corporal George Durand of Company B, died the following day. He would become the first member of the 48th New York to perish at the hands of the Confederates.<sup>58</sup>

During the summer months there had been a series of changes in the command of the Department of the South. Brigadier General John M. Brannon had temporarily replaced General Hunter. On September 17th, 1862, Major General Ormsby M. Mitchell assumed permanent command of the department. He was well liked by the 48th and on October 9th, he visited the regiment at Fort Pulaski. During his visit, he was highly impressed with the 48th, and complimented the regiment. Later that evening, he socialized with its officers over dinner. There, the officers of the 48th learned that the

regiment would be involved in another, yet larger, expedition. The expedition's objective was to destroy the Charleston and Savannah Railroad, the main Confederate line of communication between those two cities. Although General Mitchell would be integral to its planning, he would not personally see the expedition's execution. A few weeks after taking over the department he contracted yellow fever. He died on October 30th, 1862.<sup>59</sup>

Brigadier General John M. Brannon took over command of the department and perfected the arrangements for the upcoming expedition. He gathered together a force of nearly 5,000 men and artillery, and a number of gunboats and steamers. The plan called for the expedition to be split into two forces. The main force would sail up the Broad River and Bee's Creek and land at Mackey's Point, South Carolina. From there the force would march inland towards Pocotaligo, South Carolina, where it would destroy the railroad. A supporting force, under the command of Colonel Barton, would continue past Mackey's Point and land south of Pocotaligo. From there, the force would march inland and destroy the railroad and its associated bridge near the town of Coosawhatchie, South Carolina, to prevent the arrival of reinforcements from Savannah. The supporting force would be made up of 300 men from the 48th New York, 50 men from the 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, and 50 men from the 1st New York Engineers.<sup>60</sup>

At 8 a.m. on October 21st, 1862, a detachment of six companies (50 men per company) of the 48th New York, and 50 men of the 3rd Rhode Island, left Fort Pulaski on the *Planter* and proceeded to Hilton Head to meet with the rest of the expeditionary force. The men of the 48th New York carried three days cooked rations and seven days uncooked rations. The morning of the twenty-second found them opposite Mackey's

Point on the Coosawhatchie River. It was in rear of the main fleet, which numbered fifteen gunboats and transports. After the main force had gone ashore, the supporting force got underway and headed up the Coosawhatchie River.

The gunboats *Marblehead* and *Patroon* accompanied the *Planter*. The three vessels had gone only a short distance up the river when the *Planter* ran aground opposite the Dawson Plantation, near the main house. At this point, they were two miles away from the town of Coosawhatchie. Barton quickly ordered his troops ashore via small boats. The steamer *Planter* carried four guns of her own and Barton had also acquired a twelve-pound Dahlgren boat-howitzer from the naval flagship *Paul Jones*.

Colonel Barton ordered the vessels to fire shells inland while his detachment went ashore. He had the boat-howitzer offloaded, as well as twelve of the artillerymen to man it. The ground was rough, but the landing was made. The force marched inland towards the main road leading into town. Barton then ordered the officer in command of the *Patroon* to cover the road in his rear as he advanced. The *Patroon* and the *Marblehead* had both run aground in the river and were located about a mile and a half back from the landing site.

Company H, under Lieutenant Nichols, served as the force's advance element. As soon as Nichols' men approached the main road, they reported encountering squads of enemy cavalry. They managed to drive the cavalry off, and the main force continued to advance up the main road towards town, all the while helping to drive the enemy's pickets in as well. When the force reached an open area, approximately one mile from the town, they heard the whistle of a locomotive. They moved quickly towards the tracks and, just as the skirmishers arrived on the track itself, the train was seen coming rapidly

down the road. The main body was still a few hundred yards from the town and Barton hurried them to the tracks.

He placed his battalion in a concealed firing position alongside the tracks. When the train was less than ten feet away, he ordered his men to stand and fire. A devastating volley of musket, grape and canister fire ripped into the train's engine and cars. The train consisted of eight cars, six of which were platform cars crowded with men and two carrying officers. There were also two light field pieces aboard. Many of the enemy, including the train's engineer, fell from the Federals' first volley. Approximately thirty wounded or dying men jumped from the train. Eventually, seventy of the enemy were killed or wounded from the ambush. Thirty stands of arms, a sword and cap from an officer, knives, and a stand of colors, were captured. The flag belonged to the "Whippy Swamp Guards," from the 1st Georgia Regiment. Members of the 11th Georgia Regiment had also been aboard the train. Their commander, Major Harrison, was killed in the ambush.

After the train had passed, the engineers and men set about tearing up the track and demolishing the telegraph line at that location. Barton then ordered the force to move toward the town and attempt to attack the troops as they were disembarking. However, after going forward only a short distance, the enemy's full force came into view. The Confederates were well emplaced, and they outnumbered the Federal force two to one. The Rebels opened fire and Barton ordered his men to return a few volleys. However, seeing that he was well outnumbered, and noting that it was nearly night, Barton ordered a retreat and his expedition fell back towards the landing.

Rebel cavalry harassed the force as it made its way back to the ships, but the Federals easily drove them off. Federal engineers destroyed the bridges as they crossed them to hinder the Rebels' pursuit. Despite being attacked on three separate occasions as it embarked the *Planter*, the force was finally loaded on to the ship, thanks to the guns of the *Planter* and *Patroon*. The ships then shelled the estimated position of the enemy bridge and depot for two additional hours before retiring. The expedition eventually returned to Fort Pulaski via Mackey's Point and Hilton Head. The only casualty sustained during the operation was an officer of the 3rd Rhode Island who was wounded during the Rebel's last attack on the *Planter*.

The main force, under General Brannan, that had gone to Pocotaligo was turned away from its objective with heavy losses. It has been surmised that the losses would have been much worse had the supporting element under Colonel Barton not ambushed the train full of reinforcements and torn up and shelled the track further to the south.<sup>61</sup>

Following the late year expeditions, life for the 48th New York settled down again to a regular routine. The work of repairing the fort and replacing the guns injured in the April bombardment went on as usual, along with their regular routine of drill and garrison life. Hunting and visits to the other islands continued. The men engaged in a number of sporting events, such as rowing, regattas and rounders, the forerunner of modern baseball. The men became very good at rounders. During one particular game against the 47th New York in January of 1863, the nine of the 48th New York beat the nine of the 47th, twenty to seven.

A few ventures were also made upriver towards Savannah. Lieutenant Perry, son of the former colonel of the regiment, took a boatload of five men under a flag of truce up

the Savannah to a designated location to exchange dispatches with the Confederates. At one point, they had rowed past the pickets to get a closer view of the rebel ram that was being built. They were eventually shot at by both the pickets and the guns of Fort Jackson and were subsequently captured. However, due to the captives "lively" nature, they were eventually let go and returned to the fort.<sup>62</sup>

But, the 48th New York's greatest source of entertainment came from its theater productions. Some of the men in the regiment were former actors, or had been involved with the theater in some manner back home. They would get together and form "Barton's Dramatic Association," to entertain guests and dignitaries from the department and the local union populace. The association's performances were held in an attractive theater that was built near the north dock of the fort. Stage supplies had been requested from the North and the theater became, over time, well supplied and cared for.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1862, the regiment held a grand holiday festival, and many guests were invited. General Brannan, General Alfred H. Terry and General Rufus Saxton were among many of the prominent officers in attendance during the event. Numerous ladies were also in attendance. The companies competed in a vast variety of sporting events and there were a number of social, musical, and dining events held throughout the day. The day was capped off by a ball, which was held inside three highly decorated casemates. The regimental band supplied the music, and all had a fine time.<sup>63</sup>

During the latter half of 1862, and early into 1863, the regiment's upper officer corps underwent a number of changes. On December 24th, 1862, Colonel Barton announced that Lieutenant Colonel Beard had resigned from the service. He had been serving most of the period away from the regiment, in other parts of the department.

Major Green was promoted and replaced him as lieutenant colonel. Captain Strickland ascended from the captaincy of Company H, to take over the position of major. Captain Travis of Company B resigned in August of 1862 and was subsequently replaced as captain by Lieutenant Elfwing. Captain Knowles of Company D resigned his commission in June due to the poor health brought on while erecting the breaching batteries on the mud islands. Lieutenant Paxson would replace him as captain.

The captaincy of Company F evolved to Samuel Swartwout, formerly of Company I. That post had originally belonged to Captain Green, when the regiment was initially formed, but when he was promoted to major following Colonel Perry's sudden death in June of 1862, the captaincy of Company F had passed to Captain William L. Lockwood of Company H. Captain Lockwood took command of his old company, Company H, when Captain Strickland moved up to major.

Lieutenant Ferguson had commanded Company I since Captain Ward had resigned back in January of 1862. Lieutenant Hurst, formerly of Company E, was promoted to captain and took command of Company K in January of 1863. These changes brought about other positional changes within the companies. On February 6th, 1863, Chaplain Strickland left the regiment as well. Strangely, the regiment would not designate an official replacement for him until April of 1864.<sup>64</sup>

The regiment held a few more forays up the Savannah River during the remainder of 1862 and into late spring of 1863. It also conducted another minor expedition to Bluffton on June 3rd, 1863. The detachment was under orders to burn the town. General Hunter had commanded this in retaliation for certain unwarlike depredations that had been brought upon his forces by the enemy. The spoliations of Bluffton by the numerous



expeditions of the 48th New York would later cause General P. G. T. Beauregard, Confederate commander of the district, to lodge a protest through official channels over the regiment's actions.<sup>65</sup>

There were other events that held the attention of the men while in garrison. The regiment captured a schooner on March 30th. It became the 48th's first seizure of an enemy vessel. One morning, after breakfast, the sound of naval gunfire was heard close by. A number of the men scrambled to the parapet and witnessed the famous battle between the *CSS Atlanta* and the monitors *USS Nahant* and *USS Weehawken*. A photographer came to the fort and took pictures of the entire regiment, as well as individual shots of the companies. A number of casual shots were also taken of the officers.<sup>66</sup>

Some of the officer's wives had been with the regiment since it went into garrison. They had helped make life within the confines of the fort feel a bit more refined and pleasant. These ladies were Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Avery, Mrs. Mulford and Mrs. Fisher.<sup>67</sup>

In the spring of 1863, there were indications that the department was becoming more serious about taking Charleston. Rumors began to abound that more concerted efforts would be enacted to take the city and, naturally, the men of the 48th wondered if they too, would be involved. The men had grown all too weary of the idleness that garrison life brought about. They were eager to get into "some action." On February 3rd, a number of generals from within the department, including General Hunter (who had reassumed command of the Department of the South shortly after the death of General Mitchel), General John G. Foster, and General Truman Seymour, came to visit

the regiment at the fort. The generals were highly complimentary. Most importantly, their visit signaled that more important events were in store for the regiment.<sup>68</sup>

For the men of the 48th New York, the year at Fort Pulaski had been an irksome period of service. They had joined the army to fight the Rebels but with few exceptions, they had felt more like spectators to the war. Virtually every one of them wanted the war to be over so they could return home. That would occur when the enemy was defeated in battle. However, the 48th New York could help little achieve that end if they were tucked away way down south guarding a fort. This frustrated the men incredibly. But, in June of 1863, events occurred which signified things were about to change for the 48th New York. Perry's Saints, it seemed, would indeed have their chance for a moment of glory.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Abraham J. Palmer, *The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers, In the War for the Union, 1861-1865* (Brooklyn: Veteran Association of the Regiment, 1885), 236.

<sup>2</sup>James M. Nichols, *Perry's Saints or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 38.

<sup>3</sup>Palmer, 10; Nichols, 39.

<sup>4</sup>Patricia L. Faust, ed., *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1986), 37; and Palmer, 10.

<sup>5</sup>Palmer, 10-11; and Nichols, 39-40.

<sup>6</sup>Nichols, 40-41.

<sup>7</sup>Nichols, 40-41; and Palmer, 11, 13.

<sup>8</sup>Nichols, 42; and Palmer, 12.

<sup>9</sup>Palmer, 12.

<sup>10</sup>Palmer, 12-13; and Nichols, 42-44.

<sup>11</sup>Palmer, 12.

<sup>12</sup>E. Milby Burton, *The Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 69; and Palmer, 13.

<sup>13</sup>Palmer, 13-14.

<sup>14</sup>Palmer, 14; and Nichols 48.

<sup>15</sup>Palmer, 14-15; and Nichols, 48-55.

<sup>16</sup>Palmer, 15-16; and Nichols, 51-52.

<sup>17</sup>Palmer, 16-18; and Nichols, 55-56.

<sup>18</sup>Palmer, 17-19; and Nichols, 56-59.

<sup>19</sup>Palmer, 20; and Nichols, 61-62.

<sup>20</sup>Palmer, 20-21; and Nichols, 65, 70.

<sup>21</sup>Palmer, 22; and Nichols, 70-71.

<sup>22</sup>Palmer, 22-23; and Nichols, 71-72.

<sup>23</sup>Palmer, 23; and Nichols, 72.

<sup>24</sup>Palmer, 24; and Nichols, 73-74.

<sup>25</sup>Frank J. Welcher, *The Union Army, 1861-1865, Organization and Operations*. Vol. 1, *The Eastern Theater* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 92; Palmer, 24-25; and Nichols, 73-74.

<sup>26</sup>Robert Carse, *Department of the South, Hilton Head Island in the Civil War* (Columbia, South Carolina: The State Printing Company, 1961), 35-37; and Palmer, 24.

<sup>27</sup>Palmer, 25; and Nichols, 74.

<sup>28</sup>Palmer, 25; and Nichols, 75.

<sup>29</sup>Abram McGee to friend, January 11, 1862, 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection; Palmer, 25-27; and Nichols, 75-76.

<sup>30</sup>Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (Albany, New York: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912), 2338, 2357; Palmer, 27; and Nichols, 76-77.

<sup>31</sup>Palmer, 27; and Nichols, 77.

<sup>32</sup>Palmer, 28; and Nichols, 77.

<sup>33</sup>Palmer, 28; and Nichols, 77-78.

<sup>34</sup>Palmer, 28, 30; and Nichols, 78.

<sup>35</sup>William J. Carlton, *Company D, ("The Die-No-Mores") of the Forty-Eighth Regiment, New York State Volunteers, 1861-5* (Privately Printed, 1892), 12; Palmer, 30; and Nichols, 78-79.

<sup>36</sup>Palmer, 30-31; and Nichols, 80-81.

<sup>37</sup>Palmer, 31; and Nichols, 81, 83-86.

<sup>38</sup>Palmer, 31; and Nichols, 81-82.

<sup>39</sup>Amasa B. White to wife, February 20, 1862, 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.

<sup>40</sup>Palmer, 32; and Nichols, 83.

<sup>41</sup>Palmer, 32; and Nichols, 83-84, 87-93.

<sup>42</sup>Palmer, 32; and Nichols, 86-87.

<sup>43</sup>Bruce Catton, *The Army of the Potomac: Mr. Lincoln's Army* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1951); and Palmer, 32-35.

<sup>44</sup>Palmer, 36; Nichols, 94-95; and Faust, 278.

<sup>45</sup>Brigadier General Quincy A. Gillmore, *The Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Thomas Publications, 1988), 32-33, 36; Palmer, 36-37; and Nichols 95-99.

<sup>46</sup>Palmer, 38-39; and Nichols 100-103.

<sup>47</sup>Amasa B. White to wife, May 25, 1862, 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection; Palmer, 40; and Nichols, 105-107.

<sup>48</sup>Amasa B. White to wife, May 25, 1862; Palmer, 41-42; and Nichols, 107.

<sup>49</sup>Amasa B. White to wife, July 4, 1862, July 20, 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection; and Palmer, 42-43.

<sup>50</sup>Amasa B. White to wife, June 19, 1862, 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection; Palmer, 43; and Nichols, 112-113.

<sup>51</sup>White to wife, June 19, June 24, 1862, 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection; Palmer, 43-45; and Nichols, 113-115.

<sup>52</sup>Palmer, 45; and Nichols, 116-117, 120-121.

<sup>53</sup>Palmer, 45, 247, 255; and New York State, *Report of the Adjutant General* (Albany: New York State Press, 1901), 1156.

<sup>54</sup>Caswell A. Bates to friend, July 18, 1862, 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection; White to wife, June 24, June 29, July 4, August 11, 1862; Palmer, 45-46; and Nichols, 119.

<sup>55</sup>Palmer, 214-215.

<sup>56</sup>William B. Barton to W. P. Prentice, September 25, 1862, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*, hereafter referred to as *O. R. A.*, Series I, Vol. 14, 122-123.

<sup>57</sup>William B. Barton to W. P. Prentice, October 4, 1862, *O. R. A.*, Series I, Vol. 14, 125-126; Palmer, 46; and Nichols, 121-123.

<sup>58</sup>William B. Barton to W. P. Prentice, October 18, 1862, *O. R. A.*, Series I, Vol. 14, 143-144; Palmer, 46-47; and Nichols, 121-123.

<sup>59</sup>Palmer, 47-51; Nichols, 118-121, 129; Welcher, 91; and Faust, 503.

<sup>60</sup>Palmer, 51; and Nichols, 124.

<sup>61</sup>Ormsby M Mitchel to H. W. Halleck, October 24, 1862, *O. R. A.*, Series I, Vol. 14, 144-147; Palmer, 51-56; and Nichols, 124-129.

<sup>62</sup>Palmer, 56-57; and Nichols, 132-133, 139, 141-142.

<sup>63</sup>Palmer, 56-64; and Nichols, 132-140, 147-148.

<sup>64</sup>Palmer, 64-65, 247-249, 255, 261, 268, 275, 282, 296, 302, 308; Nichols, 140-141, 143-144; and Phisterer, 2358-2377.

<sup>65</sup>Palmer, 46, 66; and Nichols, 52, 55.

<sup>66</sup>Nichols, 148, 155; and Palmer, 67.

<sup>67</sup>Palmer, 67.

<sup>68</sup>Palmer, 65; and Nichols, 143, 148, 151.

<sup>69</sup>Nichols, 120, 152.

## CHAPTER 4

### TO TAKE CHARLESTON

The Charleston defenses are like a porcupine hide with the quills turned outside in.<sup>1</sup>

Rear Admiral Samuel F. Dupont  
*Gate of Hell*

In the early summer of 1863, Federal operations continued to focus upon three principal objectives: (1) capture the Confederacy's capital of Richmond, (2) reopen the Mississippi River to its mouth, and (3) blockade the entire Rebel seacoast. The latter was key to the North's war effort, not only because it denied the Confederacy the ability to import manufactured goods and weapons to sustain her war efforts, but because it also negated France's and England's ability to credibly recognize the Confederate States of America as an independent nation-state.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after President Lincoln issued his blockade proclamation on April 16, 1861, specifying that vessels attempting to enter or leave Southern ports would be first warned, then captured and confiscated, the Federals organized a joint "Blockade Strategy Board" to devise a plan to properly blockade the Southern coast. The board, knowing that the Confederacy would be dependant on a constant flow of materials and munitions from Europe, concluded that the main effort of the blockade should be placed against the region's major ports, where such trade could originate.<sup>3</sup>

During the time of the Civil War, Charleston, South Carolina, was the South's dominant shipping port along the Atlantic seaboard. It ranked second only to New Orleans in terms of trade volume and wealth, and its harbor offered safe anchorage to friendly merchantmen of all sizes. Not only could the port handle most sea-going

vessels, but it also had strategic advantage in terms of location. Charleston had excellent rail connections that could distribute incoming supplies to military depots throughout the entire Confederacy.<sup>4</sup>

Located on a peninsula formed by the convergence of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, Charleston stood four miles from the outer edge of its harbor. At the harbor's mouth were two barrier islands. On the northern side rested Sullivan's Island, while on the southern side stood Morris Island. A third island, named Folly Island, stood directly beneath Morris Island and it, too, helped protect the inner land areas of the city from the effects of the sea. Between Sullivan and Morris Islands was a shoal with a large masonry fortress called Fort Sumter. Further inside the harbor lay a small island that rested three quarters of a mile from the city. Upon this island stood a second isolated fortress named Castle Pinckney.

Politically, Charleston symbolized Southern defiance and independence. It had served as the seat for South Carolina's secession convention back in December of 1860. It also hosted the war's opening shots on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces under General P. G. T. Beauregard fired upon then Union-held Fort Sumter. The Federal garrison occupying the fort during the attack surrendered to Confederate authorities the following day. The effect of the fort's loss was tremendous, both militarily and politically, to the government and people of the North.

The Federal Government deemed it essential, for public morale and strategic purposes, that the fort be returned to Northern hands as quickly as possible. The fort was the key element to the defense of Charleston, regardless of whose hands it was in. Along with Fort Moultrie, on Sullivan's Island at the northeast side of the harbor entrance, and



Castle Pinckney, Fort Sumter controlled the water approaches into the city's harbor. By recapturing Fort Sumter the Federals could affect the subsequent seizures of Fort Moultrie, Castle Pinckney, and, eventually, the city itself. Once taken, Charleston could be used to advance further operations inland against important production centers such as Columbia and Augusta.<sup>5</sup>

Knowing full well that the Federals would someday return to attempt to take back Fort Sumter, and likely Charleston too, the Confederates immediately built upon the coastal defense system that already existed in the region. Under the overall guidance of General Beauregard and Colonels Richard H. Anderson and Roswell Saline Ripley, they shored up the defense elements of the main ship channel and James Island. To better protect the harbor, Fort Moultrie and Fort Sumter, were strengthened, given additional cannon and full garrisons.

To discourage land invasion, additional forts and batteries were constructed on James Island since it served as the most accessible land route to Charleston. Located south of Charleston, across the Ashley River, James Island was bordered to the east by marsh and mud stretching between James, Morris and Folly Islands. On the southwest side of James Island lay the Stono River, which was navigable by steamship the entire length of the island. In 1780, the British had used the Stono River to support their movements against Charleston. They had bypassed the city's water defenses by moving across James Island to the mainland, crossing the Ashley River to the Peninsula, and approaching Charleston from its landside. The Confederates were not going to allow this type of attack to occur again.

On the harbor side of James Island, the Confederates bolstered Fort Johnson. Principally a quarantine station and storage site, Fort Johnson was secondarily, a harbor fort. It could fire upon ships only after they had run past the outer works and were already inside the harbor. However, should the Federals seize Fort Johnson, Charleston and its inner harbor would be exposed to direct artillery fire. Fort Johnson and James Island were protected namely by elements of nature, numerous cannon, and strong earthworks. Federal use of the Stono River was denied by a set of fortifications that were centered upon Cole's Island at the mouth of the river. The defenses at Cole's Island also guarded the water approaches to Folly and Morris Island. With Cole Island securely held, no enemy could land upon the barrier islands without jeopardizing their communications. Considering this factor, Morris Island essentially remained defenseless for the first year of the war.<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after the fall of Sumter, General Beauregard was sent to Richmond. In November of 1861, Charleston became part of the newly formed Department of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. General Robert E. Lee was appointed its commander, and his engineering background led him to implement a department-wide defense policy based on the theory of a flexible defense. The foundation for his theory came primarily from an 1826 army report written by Major Joseph G. Totten, which outlined the requirements for a strong coastal defense policy. Realizing that he would be forced to defend the region with only a limited number of troops, Lee planned to withdraw forces to several key areas, and then send them to reinforce key garrisons by rail when they came under attack. From this point on, Charleston's harbor defense system was linked to the railway system.<sup>7</sup>

In March of 1862, Lee was called away to Virginia and his successor, Major General John Pemberton, was left to carry on Lee's work. As troops were increasingly sent to other more active theaters of the war, Pemberton faced an even more acute personnel shortage than Lee had. Pemberton was forced to withdraw troops guarding the railroads and other key points within Charleston's system of defense. This included the garrison on Cole's Island. The abandonment of Cole's Island now opened new avenues of approach for attacks, as the Federals now had access to the Stono River, which, in turn, exposed James Island and Fort Johnson.<sup>8</sup>

Besides making James Island now more susceptible to capture, the abandonment of Cole's Island also changed the status of defense arrangements of Folly and Morris Islands. Both were now open to Federal occupation. Pemberton decided to forego the defense of Folly Island, but he did elect to build defense structures there on Morris Island. Morris Island was typical of the barrier islands that lined the South Carolina coast. It had a sandy beach along the ocean and a large expanse of salt marsh on its inland edge. It measured three and three-quarters of a mile long and varied from twenty-five to a thousand yards in width. Ever since 1673, a marine navigational light was located on the southern tip of the island.

In the months leading up to the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, the Rebels placed a battery at Cummings Point, on the northern tip of Morris Island. The battery's main purpose was to fire upon Fort Sumter and on any vessels attempting to reinforce it. In time, redoubts were built at the island's end, near the lighthouse. After Sumter fell, the guns on the island were removed and redistributed among the other rebel defenses around Charleston. On June 3rd, 1862, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Wagner of the 1st South

Carolina Artillery Regiment was ordered to rebuild a small battery again on Cummings Point, near the old battery's location. It was named Battery Gregg after Confederate General Maxcy Gregg, who had been killed at Fredericksburg, Virginia. The battery was built so that its armament would face away from Fort Sumter and instead, fire at the channel that ran along the sea face side of Morris Island.<sup>9</sup>

Until this point, Federal Major General David Hunter had used the forces in his department only to conduct small raiding parties. He had made no large-scale effort to seize more important Confederate installations or defenses. However, with the abandonment of Cole's Island, even the slow-moving Hunter was quick to react. Taking the advice of Navy Captain John B. Marchand, whose gunboats were now patrolling the Stono River and who deemed that Fort Johnson could be taken from the rear, Hunter landed nearly 7,500 troops on June 2nd, 1862 on the southwest end of James Island. Opposing them were four thousand Confederates manning five miles of unfinished works and other lines of defense.

Thinking he was largely outnumbered, Hunter stalled. He then turned over his command to Brigadier General Henry W. Benham and left the island. Benham was ordered not to attack, but could protect his forces if they were provoked. Deeming that his forces came under the guns of an unfinished work located at Secessionville and thinking this particular work was undermanned, Benham sent a third of his force against it on June 16th in a fight that would be known as the Battle of Seccessionville. With the help of the marshy terrain, the Confederates staved off the Federal attack. As a result of his failure to obey orders, Benham was relieved from command and placed under house arrest. The remaining forces on James Island were also withdrawn.<sup>10</sup>

With the immediate threat of Federal invasion gone, the Confederates continued building their defensive works on James Island and additional batteries were built on Morris Island. With Cole's Island under Federal influence, Morris Island now became an important element in the defense of Charleston since it was well situated to guard Charleston's southern flank. Up until the Battle of Secessionville, the only fortification on Morris Island was the battery that had been erected on Cummings Point. With its principal armament covering the main ship channel, the battery's rear and southern flanks were vulnerable to land attack. Thus, Pemberton ordered that engineers construct an infantry outpost approximately 1,200 yards to the south of Battery Gregg, where Morris Island narrowed to a mere twenty five yards.

Combining the island's natural features with an efficient design, the deadly fortress was built during the summer of 1862, in a location a thousand yards from Cummings Point and fifty-five hundred yards from the southern tip of the island. Its large land face would look south and stretch from Vincent's Creek on the west of the island to the Atlantic Ocean. Its land front joined the sea front at a dominating bastion that provided an excellent field of enfilading fire. The northern wall and the wall that paralleled Vincent's Creek were minimally defended, as it was believed that no attack would come from these quarters. By its design, it was technically a battery, and was named the Neck Battery. Five months later it would be renamed Battery Wagner, in honor of thirty eight year-old Colonel Thomas M. Wagner of the 1st South Carolina Artillery. Wagner was a Charlestonian who had been mortally wounded on July 17th, 1862, when a gun exploded at nearby Fort Moultrie.<sup>11</sup>

Battery Wagner was an exceptionally strong fortification that featured naval shell guns, howitzers, and carronades along its land approaches, while sheltered coastal guns were located along its sea wall. Despite its strength, Pemberton decided to erect a number of supporting works to help keep attackers off the island. These new defenses would be built on the island's southern tip near the site of the old lighthouse, and on Black Island, a low marsh island between James and Folly Island. The Black Island batteries would cover Light-House Inlet. Additionally, a famous Floating Battery, which was used in the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter, would be placed near the mouth of Vincent's Creek to assist in sweeping Wagner's land approaches. Finally, a causeway was built between James and Morris Islands so that reinforcements could be brought out to Wagner if needed.<sup>12</sup>

Pemberton did not remain in Charleston to see the completion of his defenses. Due to political squabbles with influential local citizens, he was removed and transferred to Vicksburg, Mississippi, and General Beauregard was ordered back to Charleston to command its defenses. Beauregard discovered that Pemberton was leaving him a solid foundation on which he could build. As did his predecessors, Beauregard believed that Charleston's two major lines of defense were the main ship channel and James Island. Beauregard was concerned with two of the Federals' newest elements of warfare—rifled artillery and ironclad vessels. In addition to guarding against land attacks on James Island and the eventual use of long-range rifled artillery against the city and its key points of defense, the Confederates also had to be wary of naval attacks by ironclad warships. Despite having a small naval flotilla whose main battle force was two locally constructed ironclad rams, the Rebels did not have a strong enough naval force to counter Northern

monitors in a ship-to-ship duel. However, what truly scared Beauregard was the possibility of facing a combined sea and land attack that could further thin his already meager defense force.<sup>13</sup>

Federal plans to attack Charleston by naval forces were in fact, already in the works. As early as May of 1862, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Gustavus V. Fox, began urging the use of ironclad warships against Charleston. Both he and Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, wanted to see the city eventually destroyed. Together, they devised a plan of attack that would mainly use newly developed ironclad monitors. The monitors' eleven-inch and fifteen-inch guns would be crucial to any naval force running past the city's harbor defenses. Upon reviewing the plan, President Lincoln gave it his mark of approval, and Rear Admiral Samuel F. Du Pont, flag officer of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, was selected to command the effort.

Du Pont did not favor the plan. He was critical of its inherent design and dependence on the new, mainly untested monitors. Nonetheless, he gave it his support. The Federal army made preparations to facilitate the assault. During this time, The Department of the South was still feeling the effects of a series of changes in its command structure. Because of his lack of action within the department, General Hunter was replaced by General Mitchel. When Mitchel died of yellow fever shortly after taking command, Brigadier General John Brannon was temporarily placed in command of the department until General Hunter could return. To add edge to Hunter's sword, Brigadier General Truman Seymour was also sent south. Seymour had been a member of Fort Sumter's garrison when it had surrendered back in April of 1861. He longed to see

Charleston suffer for the humiliation he and the rest of the garrison had been made to endure.<sup>14</sup>

Seymour arrived in the theater of operations ahead of Hunter, and he quickly made contact with Du Pont and Brannan. Before a week had passed, Seymour had gathered information on Charleston's defenses and concluded that the navy could not capture the city without the army's assistance. To this end, Seymour proposed an assault on Morris Island, the capture of Fort Wagner (The Federals called it Fort Wagner while the Confederates referred to it as Battery Wagner), and the establishment of breaching batteries on Cummings Point. With this additional firepower aimed at Fort Sumter, Seymour believed that naval vessels could gain entrance to the harbor and capture Charleston. Despite its merit, Seymour's plan was quickly shelved when Hunter was reinstated as commander. Hunter neutralized Seymour by making him his chief of staff and chief of artillery, positions that placed the impetuous officer squarely under Hunter's control.<sup>15</sup>

Hunter would again prove to be ineffective in his role of commander of the department. Despite being sent 10,000 additional troops from North Carolina under Major General John G. Foster, and despite Foster's aggressive attempts to push for the adoption of a plan similar in concept, yet grander in scale, than Seymour's, Hunter refused to take positive measures. Foster and Hunter quickly grew at odds with one another and eventually, Foster left the department. His departure adversely affected the leadership of the department, and because of this, it was unable to provide sound assistance to the navy as it prepared its attack.<sup>16</sup>



Du Pont had held off his attack for months, not only because he had to await the collective arrival of his monitor force, but also because of his increasing concerns over reports that the city had vastly improved its defenses. Du Pont characterized Charleston Harbor as a "porcupine hide with the quills turned outside in and sewed up at one end." Forts and batteries, totaling 149 guns, torpedoes (mines), rope barriers, log and chain booms and several gunboats, were available to defend the city. Though the navy expected Du Pont to capture Charleston, his orders made no mention of the city. His plan called for the ironclads to move down the main ship channel, enter the harbor and pummel Fort Sumter into submission. Then they were to turn their guns on Morris Island. Eventually, he planned to link up with the army and move on to Charleston in short, controlled advances.

Despite his leadership problems, Hunter put together a force of 10,000 soldiers and numerous siege guns on army transports and sent them to join the navy at North Edisto Inlet. The general did not expect a major role in the coming action, but he wanted to be in a position to occupy Charleston should the attack prove successful. His subordinates had other desires. Hunter's chief of staff, Brigadier General Truman Seymour, and chief engineer, Captain James C. Duane, made plans to land on Folly Island when the attack began, and then continue on and seize Morris Island.<sup>17</sup>

In the early afternoon of April 7th, 1863, Du Pont's flotilla of seven monitors and one ironclad gunship got underway and began to steam up the channel and into the harbor. From the beginning, things began to fall apart. The *USS Weehawken*, serving as the lead monitor and dragging an anti-mine device, gets tangled up in the device's lines. Other vessels are late getting underway. The ironclad *USS New Ironsides* proves so

awkward in maneuvering through the restricted waters that she has to set anchor twice to prevent herself from being grounded.

By mid-afternoon, the head of the column nears Fort Sumter. As it approaches the fort, pre-sighted guns begin to rake the flotilla. Despite the barrage from the majority of the guns in the harbor, during the next two and one-half hours, the naval force manages to get off 139 shots, with 55 hitting the fort. The shots do some brick damage, but little to threaten the integrity or safety of the work. Instead, it is the vessels that take the brunt of the punishment, sustaining over 400 hits in total. The *USS Keokuk* sustains over 90 hits alone and sinks the following day. The *Weehawken* is hit fifty-three times, the *USS Nahant* fifty-one times, and the *USS Patapsco* forty-seven times. Seeing that the day is getting long, and that his fleet is being mauled, Du Pont orders his ships to withdraw. He plans to renew the attack the following day but is talked out of the idea by the ship's commanding officers.<sup>18</sup>

While the naval force is engaging the harbor defenses, General Hunter allows General Seymour to land a brigade of troops on Folly Island. Pushing a two-gun battery and the 100th New York Regiment up to the island's northern end, Seymour carries out a successful reconnaissance of the Confederate works on the southern end of Morris Island. Realizing that they are unfinished, Seymour requests permission to attack across Light-House Inlet, but Hunter denies the request. Frustrated, Seymour establishes a picket line and masks the battery overlooking Light-House Inlet. He then takes the remaining troops of the New York regiment and rejoins the rest of his command on Folly's southern end.

While the naval battle rages, the Confederates ignore the Federal forces on Folly Island. However, upon the battle's conclusion, the Rebels send a raiding party across

Light-House Inlet to Folly Island. Caught off-guard, the Federal pickets on Folly are thrown back, but the masked battery remains undetected. The artillerymen, with orders not to fire under any circumstances, watch the whole ordeal. After finally driving in the Federal vedettes, the Rebels return to Morris Island, leaving the artillerymen, alone but still undetected.

The affair at Light-House Inlet causes the Federals to reconsolidate near Stono Inlet. That evening, Seymour and Duane meet with Du Pont and ask him to join them in their planned assault on Morris Island. Du Pont, fearing more damage to his monitors, refuses. Seymour and Duane, realizing they have few other options, settle on establishing a base on Folly Island for future operations against Morris Island. They station a brigade under Brigadier General Israel Vogdes on the island's southern end. Additionally, the 100th New York Regiment is sent to garrison Cole's Island, while Brigadier General Thomas G. Stevenson's brigade, along with a company of artillery and some engineers, is left upon Seabrook Island. Hunter takes the remainder of his force from the region and sails back with it to Port Royal. Du Pont in turn, pulls his monitors away from Charleston and the city remains in Confederate hands, following yet another unsuccessful Federal attack.<sup>19</sup>

The fallout from this debacle was inevitable: Admiral Du Pont was relieved of command shortly after. He was removed for his mishandling of the attack, as well as for having made many political enemies while trying to defend his actions. Rear Admiral Andrew H. Foote was selected to replace Du Pont, and Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren was appointed his second-in-command. Meanwhile, on the army side, Brigadier General Quincy A. Gillmore, the North's most proficient artillery and engineering technician,

replaced Hunter as the commander of the Department of the South. Gillmore, the top cadet in West Point's Class of 1849, had previously served in a number of engineering capacities before the war. Upon the start of hostilities, he was a captain assigned as the chief engineer of the joint army-navy expedition that seized Port Royal in November of 1861. After building defenses on Hilton Head Island, Gillmore made a name for himself by planning and directing the highly successful artillery attack on Fort Pulaski. He was rewarded with a brigadier general's commission in the volunteer army and subsequently transferred to the Department of the Ohio, where he led an infantry division.

In May of 1863, while on a leave of absence, Gillmore learned that his name was being considered to head up a new attack upon Charleston. He had always wanted to return to the South and utilizing a well-placed connection within the War Department, he was soon summoned to Washington to aid in the attack's planning. General Seymour was also in town at the time of the conference on medical leave. Seymour had long been fed up with Du Pont and Hunter and while in Washington, he had taken his complaints, as well as his ideas, to Major General Henry W. Halleck, the North's senior general. Gillmore believed that a joint attack on the harbor defenses of Charleston was the key to carrying Charleston. He further deemed that, in order to successfully carry out this attack, the Federals must first seize control of Morris Island. From there, land-based artillery could reduce Fort Sumter and allow the navy to steam successfully into the harbor and capture Charleston. On June 3rd, 1863, Gillmore was selected to replace Hunter and with this appointment, General Seymour finally gained the supportive ally he needed to help him carry out his plans to capture Morris Island.<sup>20</sup>

Foote, Dahlgren and Gillmore set about detailing the plans for their attack. Using their version of the designs proposed by Generals Foster and Seymour, the two overall commanders agreed to first attack and capture the whole of Morris Island, including Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg, which they felt could be quickly overrun and then easily defended. From Morris Island, breaching batteries would reduce Fort Sumter and once Sumter was taken out, the navy could remove the remaining channel obstructions, enter the harbor, and capture Charleston. Though the details of the plan were never written down, the three did manage to reach a verbal understanding on its arrangements. Once the planning was concluded, Gillmore left for his department, while Foote and Dahlgren remained in Washington to complete final details. All along, Foote had been plagued by a nagging injury that he had received while helping to capture Fort Donelson, Kentucky. The wound became infected and, on June 21st, he was forced to relinquish command of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron to Dahlgren. Foote died on June 26th, 1863.<sup>21</sup>

Gillmore arrived at Hilton Head on June 11th and met with his staff and the key personnel involved in the attack. He then set out on a trip to inspect Folly Island. The island was key to Gillmore's plan and after arriving, he met with General Vogdes to outline his plan and inspect the defenses. Gillmore directed Vogdes to erect offensive batteries on the island's northeastern tip, as these works would cover Gillmore's forces as they crossed Light-House Inlet to Morris Island. Specifically, they would be located on Little Folly Island, which at high tide, was separated from the rest of Folly Island. These batteries would have to be built after dark, so as to not tip off the Rebels of the pending attack. The island's heavy vegetation would also help in disguising the battery's location and construction.

While this work was being done, Gillmore set about organizing his forces for the attack. He selected as his two division commanders Brigadier General Alfred Terry and General Seymour. A Yale-educated lawyer before the war, Terry was a solid soldier and leader who had proven himself while serving as a regimental commander at Seccesionville and Pocotaligo Bridge. Gillmore also brought in Brigadier General George C. Strong to command the assault's spearhead. A West Point graduate from the Class of 1857, Strong had served principally in the Virginia campaigns. Strong arrived on June 17th and immediately impressed his superiors with his determination and commitment to the plan. Because he tended to lead by example, the men placed under his command soon revered him. All in all, Gillmore committed 11,000 infantry, 350 artillerists and 400 engineers from his 21, 323 effectives for the attack.<sup>22</sup>

Units participating in the attack began to mobilize and assemble. On June 18th, the 48th New York which still garrisoned Fort Pulaski, received a visit from General Gillmore. That evening, a cable message was sent to the Fort ordering eight companies of the regiment to prepare cooked rations and be ready for embarkation in the morning. This caused great excitement within the fort. At long last, the regiment would see action. Two companies would be left behind to garrison the fort and provide pickets on Tybee Island. The two companies chosen to remain behind for these duties were G and I respectively. It was decided that embarkation of the departing companies, aboard the steamer *Ben De Ford*, should be held off until after dark the following day so as to not disclose to the enemy the weakening of the fort's garrison. After this was done, the vessel departed the fort and anchored off Tybee Island for the night. The next day the

regiment landed on St. Helena Island, near Port Royal, and went into camp with the rest of General Strong's brigade. The brigade was detailed as follows:

First Brigade  
Brigadier General George C. Strong

48th New York  
3rd New Hampshire  
76th Pennsylvania  
9th Maine

The brigade spent the next two weeks in drill and organization. On June 27th, Lieutenant Nichols of Company H of the 48th New York was placed in command of the Billingshurst-Requa Battery. Each gun in this battery consisted of a carriage that held twenty-five rifle barrels, so arranged as to all fire from a single percussion cap. Twenty-five men were detailed from each regiment to help handle the pieces. On July 4th, Strong and his brigade, along with the Independent Battalion of New York Volunteers (Enfans Perdus), and Company C of the 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, were ordered to depart St. Helena Island and assemble with the rest of the assaulting forces on Folly Island, under cover of darkness. On this same date, General Seymour was given command of all forces on Folly Island and, on the following day, he inherited command of all the adjacent islands in Federal possession. "Strong's Fighting Brigade" transferred to Folly Island, via the steamer *Harriet M. Weed*, and on July 6th was reorganized as follows:

Second Brigade  
Brigadier General George C. Strong

48th New York  
6th Connecticut  
7th Connecticut (Four Companies)

9th Maine  
3rd New Hampshire  
76th Pennsylvania  
Company C, 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery

On July 8th, the headquarters for the Department of the South was established on Folly Island. The army now busied itself for the upcoming assault on Morris Island.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen R. Wise, *Gate of Hell* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, *Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, Vol. 9, Operations on the Atlantic Coast, 1861-1865, Virginia 1862, 1864* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1989), 161.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy, Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 3, 13; and Patricia L. Faust, ed., *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1986), 67.

<sup>4</sup> Wise, *Gate of Hell*, 7; and *Lifeline of the Confederacy*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> E. Milby Burton, *The Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 5; Faust, 279-80, 703; and Wise, *Gate of Hell*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Wise, *Gate of Hell*, 8-10.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 12-13.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Yoseloff, *Confederate Military History, Vol. 5* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1962), 223; and Wise, *Gate of Hell*, 13-14.

<sup>11</sup> Wise, *Gate of Hell*, 14-17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18, 22-23.



<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 23-26.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>18</sup>E. B. Potter, *Seapower: A Naval History* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1981), 144-145; and Wise, *Gate of Hell*, 30-31. Wise quotes 154 shots being fired from the monitors. Additionally, his work claims that Du Pont made the unilateral decision to not renew the attack.

<sup>19</sup>Wise, *Gate of Hell*, 31-32.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 32-34.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 38-40, 42-43.

<sup>23</sup>Abraham J. Palmer, *The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers, in the War for the Union, 1861-1865* (Brooklyn: Veteran Association of the Regiment, 1885), 77-78; Frank J. Welcher, *The Union Army, 1861-1865, Organization and Operations*. Vol. 1, The Eastern Theater (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 101; and James M. Nichols, *Perry's Saints or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 157-162.

## CHAPTER 5

### "THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN." THE 48th NEW YORK DURING THE BATTLES FOR MORRIS ISLAND AND FORT WAGNER

It was in the second and great attempt to carry this earthen-work by assault on the night of July 18, 1863, that the Forty-Eighth Regiment achieved immortality.<sup>1</sup>

Private Abraham J. Palmer, Forty-Eighth New York  
*The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York  
State Volunteers, In the War for the Union, 1861-1865*

Although Brigadier General Quincy Gillmore originally planned to conduct a two-pronged night assault to take Morris Island, he eventually adopted a plan of attack that consisted of one grand assault. "Strong's Fighting Brigade" was given the honor of conducting this assault. The adopted plan called for the brigade to embark in small launches on the Folly River the night before the attack. Upon hearing a signal fired from the batteries early the next morning, the troops would then row across Light-House Inlet, a distance of approximately 600 yards, and land in the surf on Morris Island. Both before and during the crossing, the force would be covered by artillery fire from the masked batteries on Folly, and a flotilla of naval monitors. Once ashore, the force would consolidate and be reinforced by additional troops coming over from Folly. The force would travel three miles up to Fort Wagner and assault it. Following Wagner's capture, the force would then proceed three-quarters of a mile up to Battery Gregg and carry that work as well. As they crossed Light-House Inlet, the troops would be under constant fire from Confederate rifle pits and artillery batteries on the southern end of Morris Island. From there, they would travel the length of the island also under fire from Forts Wagner, Johnson, Sumter and Battery Gregg.<sup>2</sup>

The assault would initiate from Folly Island. Seven miles in length and no more than a mile wide at its broadest point, Folly Island was bordered on the west by the Folly River and a succession of marshes. On the east it was bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and Light-House Inlet separated its northern tip from Morris Island. The island's thick and brushy foliage made it an ideal place to hide a staging assault. Federal troops, boats, guns and equipment were brought into place and last minute arrangements were made. The masked batteries erected on Little Folly Island remained undetected. These batteries were considered essential for the assault. Because of their location, the batteries easily commanded the Confederate works on the opposite shore, which was on the southern end of Morris Island.

Despite Federal attempts to keep the attack secret, the Confederates soon became aware that something was up. Balloon observations, reconnaissance parties and intercepted messages all indicated that a Federal attack was imminent. Despite being relatively few in number, the Confederate defenses on Morris Island were stout and ready for any surprises. Huddled around the lighthouse near Light-House Inlet were eleven detached batteries of various calibers served by three companies of the 1st South Carolina Artillery. They were supported by 450 men from the 21st South Carolina Infantry Regiment and Company D of the 1st South Carolina Infantry in a series of rifle pits along the inlet. Further up at Fort Wagner, the fort housed six land-face and three sea-face guns. These were manned by 107 artillerymen of Chichester's and Mathewes' artillery companies, and 212 men of the 21st South Carolina Regiment. Further up, at Battery Gregg, thirty men worked the bastion's sea-facing guns. All in all, there were 665

infantrymen, 330 artillerymen, and 26 cavalrymen to defend Morris Island. These forces came under the overall command of Colonel Robert F. Graham.<sup>3</sup>

To help in distracting the enemy, two diversions were planned at points away from the assault. The first diversion had Colonel Thomas W. Higginson's 1st South Carolina Regiment proceeding up the South Edisto River aboard armed transports in an attempt to cut the Charleston and Savannah Railroad at Jacksonborough. The second diversion had General Alfred H. Terry's division, with a force of approximately 3,000 troops, sent up the Stono River on transports and landed on the southwest shore of James Island. There, they would feign an attack against the enemy, but they were not to commit to a full scale battle.<sup>4</sup>

The assault was originally set for the night hours of July 8th. Due to a shortage of available barges for the assault, only four companies of the 48th New York were detailed to participate in the crossing with the rest of Strong's Brigade. The remaining four companies of the 48th would have to await available transportation. Eventually, the assault was cancelled due to an overall lack of barges. The attack was rescheduled for the following night, July 10th. While the main assault force on Folly Island regrouped for another attempt the next day, General Terry proceeded with his planned diversion. He would eventually land his forces safely on James Island and, after initially facing small patches of resistance, he would remain there in place.<sup>5</sup>

After a day's delay, the main attack force on Folly was set to go. Fearing that his intentions had been discovered, Gillmore dropped his night attack plans and, instead, proceeded with plans for a single stroke, daylight attack early on the morning of the 10th. At three o'clock in the afternoon of the ninth, Strong's Brigade was assembled and

marched to awaiting launches in the Folly River. As on the night before, only four companies of the 48th New York were detailed for the landing phase of the attack. These companies were A, C, D, and F, and they were under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Green. The other four companies, under Colonel Barton, marched to the northern end of Folly Island, in rear of the batteries. Along with the other regiments involved in the initial assault, they awaited the return of the boats through the following morning.

That evening, Strong's 2, 500-man landing force, along with its four howitzer-equipped escorts, had quietly moved to its designated launch point near the entrance to Light-House inlet. There, masked by the tall grasses near the river's entrance to Light-House Inlet, the men of the brigade slept and quietly readied themselves for the next day's assault. Back near the shore batteries on Folly's northern tip, 1,350 men and a battery of light artillery waited to follow the initial landing force. Another 1,450 men were held in reserve. The army was now ready and awaiting daylight. As the assault neared, the weather became fair but hot, as there was no breeze.<sup>6</sup>

At 5:08 a.m., General Seymour gave the order for his thirty-two guns and fifteen mortars on Folly Island's northern tip to open fire. As soon as the first shots fell on their targets, the Confederates rushed to their guns and rifle pits and returned fire. The ensuing artillery duel between the opposing batteries grew fierce and grand. However, neither side appeared to be gaining an advantage. That was about to change. Shortly after the barrage began, the naval monitors which had been detailed to support the Federal attack, closed in on the sea-ward flank of the Confederate positions and began to enfilade their batteries with their eleven and fifteen-inch guns. The naval fire had a profound impact and soon caused the Confederate response to slacken and become erratic.

After a slight delay, General Strong's boats started for Morris Island. They made their way slowly, through the bursting and splashing shells. Leading the assault was the 7th Connecticut, followed by the 6th Connecticut, 3rd New Hampshire, 76th Pennsylvania, 9th Maine and the four companies of the 48th New York. As the boats approached the shore, one was sunk and two men of the 6th Connecticut were wounded. However, the Confederate artillerymen soon found that they were unable to depress their guns low enough to continue hitting the approaching boats. Plus, they were now coming into range of the riflemen stationed in their rifle pits. Despite the heavy fusillade sent up by the Confederate infantrymen, Strong and his men pressed on. Eventually Strong ordered his men ashore and all the regiments, except the 6th Connecticut, obeyed. Instead of landing, the 6th veered its boats further into the inlet and towards the ocean.<sup>7</sup>

In twenty minutes, the boats were in the surf of Morris Island. General Strong leaped ashore only to sink completely underwater. After surfacing, he proceeded towards the shore where he stripped off his waterlogged boots, and led the assault forward in his stocking feet. The first men ashore were the skirmishers, armed with Spencer seven-shot rifles. Then, regiment after regiment, with bayonets fixed, left their boats and followed the skirmishers inland. The 7th Connecticut was the first unit to reach the rifle pits and, soon, heavy hand-to-hand fighting ensued. The Confederates fought hard, but soon their defense collapsed and they began a hurried retreat up the island.

Their quick departure was mainly caused by the appearance of Colonel Chatfield's 6th Connecticut in the batteries above them. Chatfield had landed his men above the batteries and then charged the rear and flanks of the Confederate works. The

batteries were taken and the Connecticut men then dashed towards the Rebel rifle pits and began to surround them. Seeing that their troops were in danger, Confederate commanders ordered them to retreat. It quickly turned into a rout. The Confederates now ran through a combined fire from the naval monitors, the naval howitzers that were now ashore, and the Rebels own guns, which had been turned against them and were now being fired by the men of the 7th Connecticut.<sup>8</sup>

As the Southerners advanced back up Morris Island towards Fort Wagner, they met two battalions of Confederate reinforcements sent to assist them at the southern end of the island. However, the situation was now chaotic and seeing that his position at Light-House Inlet was totally lost, Colonel Graham ordered all his forces into Wagner. Strong, now riding a captured mule, ordered his troops to continue pursuing the fleeing enemy. The soldiers were inspired by the discovery of newspapers in the captured works that announced the fall of Vicksburg and the Union victory at Gettysburg. But even this good news, and the results of the morning's efforts, could not push the men any further up the island. They were now exhausted, and the heat was becoming unbearable. Additionally, shots fired from Fort Sumter and Fort Wagner were now having a telling effect on the Federals. Despite having reached a point within musket range of Wagner, a picket line was thrown across the island and the men took a well-deserved rest.<sup>9</sup>

The 48th New York had shone during the attack. They had managed to drive out the rebels from the first line of rifle pits, and then, by a flanking movement, had driven out a second. The regiment's remaining companies had also successfully crossed the inlet. But these achievements came at a cost. Captain Louis Lent of Company A became the first officer of the regiment killed in battle when he was shot at point-blank range

during the company's attempt to capture the first rifle pit. The regiment suffered the loss of one officer and five enlisted men, plus nineteen others were wounded. Union casualties during the assault resulted in fifteen men killed and ninety-one wounded. In exchange, they gained three-quarters of Morris Island, caused the Confederates to lose nearly three hundred men, eleven artillery pieces, numerous stands of small arms, and nearly all of their equipment.

Gillmore's assault had been a great success, and the coordination and execution between its participants had been superb. His only mistake was his failure to utilize fresh troops in a follow-up attack on Wagner later in the day. Although nearly three regiments were quickly transferred to Morris Island after the battle, they were not used to pursue the Confederates back to Fort Wagner. Gillmore had counted on his landing force to do all the work. Had he managed his reserves more effectively, he could have captured the whole island. However, by delaying, he gave the Confederates time to regroup and prepare for follow-up attacks. Many Federals believed the Rebels would pull off the island overnight. But Gillmore had high hopes and planned to complete the job the following morning.<sup>10</sup>

The Confederates, although dispirited and dazed from the days losses, did not waste the extra time given them. They worked feverishly through the night to bolster their defenses. They had lost about one-third of the island's fighting force during the previous day's assault and had no immediate reinforcements on hand to strengthen their numbers. However, outside assistance was on the way. During the latter part of the 10th, reinforcements from elsewhere in the department began to arrive. A regiment of Georgians was sent to James Island, while a mixed command of eleven Georgia



companies was sent to Morris Island. This addition increased Wagner's garrison by nearly a third. Torpedoes, palisades, chevaux-de-frise, sharp spikes, wire entanglements and rifle pits were set up outside the fort. After accounting for all the reinforcements and additions, the Confederates now had roughly 1, 770 men to defend what remained of Confederate Morris Island and Fort Wagner.

The 48th New York, along with the rest of Strong's Brigade, encamped on the sand of Morris Island. Plans called for the brigade to send three regiments forward before daylight to capture Fort Wagner. Four companies of the 7th Connecticut, along with the 76th Pennsylvania and the 9th Maine, were selected for the assault and, at five o'clock in the morning, they moved forward under cover of the dense fog that hugged the ground. General Strong had ordered them to rush the fortress with bayonets only, not stopping to fire until they were directly upon Wagner. The Confederates were ready for them. As the Federals approached, a crash of musket fire, then heavy doses of canister, grape and musket fire, raked them.

Soon, the Connecticut companies, which formed the lead element of the force, found themselves alone and trapped along the outside wall of the fort. It became a case of every man for himself. The mad dash back across the fort's moat to get out of harm's way proved more costly than the initial rush. The attack was a total disaster. The 7th Connecticut lost nearly one hundred men and the next morning, only eighty-four enlisted men and four officers answered the roll. The Federals numbered 339 casualties from the ill-fated assault, while the Confederates suffered only six dead and six wounded. It was now clear to Gillmore that he was mistaken in not making better use of his initial

successes back on the 10th. It was also clear to him, and the rest of the Federals, that it would be a lot harder to take Wagner than previously thought.<sup>11</sup>

Following the debacle on July 11th, General Gillmore and Admiral Dahlgren met and decided to erect batteries and level the parapets of Wagner before attempting to carry the fort by another assault. Starting on July 12th, a progression of batteries was built toward the fort. Work on the batteries was carried out day and night for the next week. Guns and mortars were brought up from Folly Island and mounted on the Federals' works on Morris Island. Lines of rifle pits were dug across the island. The entire time this work was being done, the guns at Wagner remained active.

The men of the 48th New York, when not on picket duty, remained in position in the rear of the batteries among the sand hills. During the night of the 13th, the Rebels made a reconnaissance near the 48th's picket lines, which were manned at the time by Companies C and D. These companies were armed with telescopic rifles that were used to pick-off the artillerymen manning the guns at Wagner. The Confederate sortie was conducted in retaliation for this sniping, as well as to test the strength of the Federal lines. About 150 South Carolinians came down in the darkness upon the picket line and, with a rush and yell, engaged the 48th in a hand-to-hand struggle. The sortie was eventually repelled, but at the loss of one soldier killed, two wounded, and two taken prisoner. The Rebels suffered two killed, nine wounded, and three missing.<sup>12</sup>

The Federal bombardment on Fort Wagner grew in intensity each day. Along with the encroaching land batteries, Fort Wagner was taking large amounts of hits from the Federal naval vessels cruising along the shoreline. The large-caliber guns of the naval vessels and land artillery were believed to be causing great destruction upon the

fort, or so thought the Federal commanders. The truth of the matter was that, due to its sand and palmetto log construction, the firings were causing little damage to the fort and its structures. These men not used to fire Wagner's guns in reply were kept out of harm's way inside well-constructed bombproofs.

After nearly a week's bombardment, Gillmore decided it was time to conduct the next assault. Coordinating with the navy, he directed that an even heavier artillery fire be placed upon the fort during the time of the attack, which was initially set for sunset on July 17th. Rain, however, forced the attack to be postponed until the same time the following day. Beginning at nine a.m. on the eighteenth, the Federal artillery fire rose to a crescendo of approximately one shell every two seconds. In all, it was estimated that more than nine thousand shells were poured into the fortification during the bombardment. It was planned that, immediately following the heavy bombardment, the assaulting infantry would advance and take the fort.

During the week's break between assaults, the Confederates had received plenty of reinforcements in the Charleston area. The Confederate units inside the fort at the time of the planned assault were the 31st North Carolina, the Fifty-first North Carolina, and the Charleston Battalion. Artillerymen consisted of two companies of the 1st South Carolina Infantry (who were acting as artillerymen), two companies of the 63rd Georgia Heavy Artillery, and the 22nd Georgia Artillery Battalion. There were also 26 cavalymen of the 5th South Carolina Cavalry serving as couriers. All told, there were over 1,800 men on the island, with 1,620 located inside Fort Wagner.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after sunset the firing stopped. Gillmore, confident the bombardment had reduced the fort, conveyed a message to Admiral Dahlgren that he was sending in the

infantry. The naval vessels had fired more than 1,900 shots into the fort. After stopping their bombardment, the navy had little else to do but watch the unfolding drama on the land before them. But, unknown to the Federal commanders, the Rebels were able to decipher the code used to send messages between the Federal army and navy. They had obtained the codebook from the sunken *USS Keokuk* when she had gone down following the naval attack on Fort Sumter, back in April. The messages between Gillmore and Dahlgren warned the Confederate defenders of the impending attack.

Confederate General Taliaferro, Morris Island's new commander, ordered his men out of their bombproofs and to their guns. Forced to take eight hours of confinement during the heavy bombardment, the men were now eager to pay back the Federals for their inconvenience. Taliaferro positioned his men carefully. Three companies of the Charleston Battalion were stationed from the sally port on Vincent's Creek to the center of the work. The center was to be guarded by the 51st North Carolina, a portion of the 31st North Carolina was assigned to the seaward salient, and two companies of the Charleston Battalion were to man the seaward wall. The remaining two companies of the 31st North Carolina, coming over from Battery Gregg, would serve as the fort's reserve. All the units sprang to their positions from their bombproofs except the men of the 31st North Carolina. Shell-shocked from the bombardment, many of the men refused to come out, despite pleas from their officers. Thus, only a part of the regiment was in place along the seaward salient when the attack came.<sup>14</sup>

South of the fort, the Federal infantry made their final preparations. Gillmore's attacking force would consist of General Seymour's division. This force was detailed as follows:

Brigadier General Seymour's Division

First Brigade

Brigadier General George C. Strong

48th New York, William B. Barton

76th Pennsylvania, John S. Littell

3rd New Hampshire, Richard S. Jackson

6th Connecticut, John L. Chatfield

9th Maine, Sabine Emery

54th Massachusetts, temporarily attached from Terry's Division, Robert G. Shaw

Second Brigade

Colonel Haldimand S. Putnam

7th New Hampshire, Joseph C. Abbott

100th New York, George B. Dandy

62nd Ohio, Francis B. Pond

67th Ohio, Alvin C. Voris

Third Brigade

Brigadier General Thomas G. Stevenson

10th Connecticut, John L. Otis

97th Pennsylvania, Henry R. Guss

24th Massachusetts, Francis A. Osborn

4th New Hampshire, Louis Bell

More than 5,000 men were detailed for the assault. The 48th New York would provide 420 men and sixteen officers. Prior to the attack, the regiment ate a hearty supper and received a ration of whiskey. The Federal advance was to begin promptly at 7:45 p.m., and the 54th Massachusetts would lead Strong's Brigade as the first part of a three-wave attack. Putnam's Brigade and then Stevenson's troops would follow Strong's Brigade. They would have to advance a total of 1,350 yards before coming upon the walls of the fort. Because the area directly in front of the fort narrowed to a mere 25 yards, the force would be restricted to sending only one regiment forward at a time.<sup>15</sup>

At the appointed time, the 54th went forward, 650 strong, and formed in a column of wings. As they neared the defile, gunners on Forts Wagner and Sumter, as well as Battery Gregg, opened fire. Colonel Shaw of the 54th Massachusetts then ordered his men to charge when they were within a few hundred yards of the fort. Directed to hold their fire until they were upon the fort, the 54th advanced with only their bayonets fixed. The Rebel fire from Wagner was devastating to the Massachusetts men, and their volleys cut the men of the 54th like wheat before a scythe. Moving as fast as they could across the obstructions, the majority obliques to the left to gain the land-face wall, while a smaller portion headed toward the seaward-facing portion of the fort. It was at this point that the attack of the 54th Massachusetts stalled.

Colonel Shaw, seeing that his unit's momentum was fading, attempted to rally his troops. Climbing the crest of the fort, he shouted for his men to follow him. He was then shot dead, as a bullet had found its mark through his heart, right in front of the few men who were able to follow him up the slope. Command of the regiment now fell upon Captain Luis Emilio. Emilio could not rally his troops under the galling fire and he ordered a retreat. Within ten minutes of starting their attack, the men of the 54th were broken and retreating towards the safety of their lines. As they fled to the rear, they ran through the ranks of the other columns, which were formed up on the beach, and this caused much confusion and disorganization among them.<sup>16</sup>

The men of the 48th were standing, formed in column, by company—on the beach in front of the fort. They, along with the rest of Strong's Brigade, had witnessed the failed assault of the 54th. Now it was their turn to assail the fortress. General Strong shouted the command, "Column forward! Double-quick, march!" The 6th Connecticut

led the advance, then the 48th New York, followed by the remaining elements of the brigade. Due to the narrow defile that ran in front of the fort, many of the men were obliged to wade through the water of the ocean as they approached the fort. The brigade soon came under the same galling fire that the 54th had endured. The shelling and musketry about them was terrific. Just as the 54th had been ordered, the brigade advanced to the fort with bayonets fixed and did not fire a shot. However, unlike the Massachusetts men who had attacked mainly against the land-face of the fortress, the force moved directly towards the southeast salient.

When the first two regiments, the 6th Connecticut and the 48th New York, reached the salient, they began to simultaneously climb and fight their way up the fort's outer wall. The few soldiers of the 31st North Carolina, who had eventually come out of their bombproof, were guarding this portion of the fort. After a brief hand-to-hand struggle at the top, survivors of the two regiments jumped in and took possession of the salient. Once inside, they came under a terrible crossfire from the enemy. With this intense enemy fire, the remaining regiments of the brigade, the 3rd New Hampshire, the 76th Pennsylvania and the 9th Maine, were unable to come up in force and assist their comrades already inside the fort. They managed to attack the bastion in small parties but these units were also beaten back. Seeing that his troops were bogging down from the heavy enemy fire, General Seymour immediately dispatched his assistant inspector-general to order up Colonel Putnam with his supporting brigade.

The aide found Putnam and his men lying down, back within the Federal lines. When directed to come forward, Putnam refused, saying that he had taken orders from General Gillmore to stay where he was. No such order was ever issued. It is quite

possible that an overconfident Gillmore had advised Putnam that his men would not be needed. However, upon receiving a second directive from Seymour to bring up his men, Putnam readied his brigade. Formed by battalions into a giant column, they sprang forward and ran through the hail of gunfire towards the fort. Coming up to the daunting and deadly bastion in the darkness, Putnam's men could not distinguish the Connecticut and New York men from the Rebels atop the parapet, and soon began to fire into both friend and foe alike.<sup>17</sup>

Corporal Joseph C. Hibson, a bugler from Company C, saw what was happening. On his own initiative, he left his company and ran down through the hail of gunfire to the brigade. He apprised them of the situation and thus managed to prevent further incidents of friendly fire from occurring amongst the men. While he was down with the remainder of the brigade, Hibson took a severe wound to an arm. This did not stop him from helping his comrades, and he ran back towards his company still desperately fighting inside the fort. After returning to the company, he found the 48th's color guard had been completely shot down and the regiment's colors lying on the ground. He picked up the colors just as the Confederates began a counter-attack. He then received two more wounds, but he still managed to escape the melee and save the regiment's colors. For his actions, Hibson earned the Congressional Medal of Honor.<sup>18</sup>

As Putnam's Brigade was attempting to enter the fort, General Seymour now called on Brigadier General Stevenson's brigade to support him. Putnam's men had struck and overlapped the fort's seaward salient. Confederate fire broke up the portion of Putnam's column that rushed the southwest side of the salient, but the element that hit the same angle as the men of the 6th Connecticut and 48th New York, was able to get into



the fort. During this time, General Seymour had been wounded by a shell burst and carried from the field. As he left, he again called for Stevenson's Brigade to come forward in support of the assault.

Inside the fort, the Federals were unable to exploit their advantage. It was dark, chaotic, and extremely difficult to discern friend from foe. By its design, Wagner's southeast salient formed a fort within the fort. The roof of the main bombproof, which bisected the salient's neck, was six feet higher than the parapet. This rise afforded protection to the Federals inside, but it also deterred any advance. Thus, despite being inside the fort for nearly three hours, the Federals were unable to overcome the defenders or move forward. At first, the men inside the fort had fought for time. Now they found they were fighting for survival. Despite twice being ordered forward by General Seymour, Stevenson's men did not come to support him. General Gillmore had ordered the third brigade not to move until he had learned the result of Putnam's attack. When word reached Gillmore that a segment of Putnam's command had taken part of the battery, he sent Stevenson forward. He countermanded the order after learning that Putnam had been struck down.<sup>19</sup>

After several attempts, the Confederates, utilizing soldiers from the Charleston Battalion, the 51st and 31st North Carolina, and the 32nd Georgia, were now having success in dislodging the pesky Federals. Scores of men in blue began to fall, surrender or attempt to escape. Eventually, only a few Federals were left alive to continue any resistance. Lieutenant Barrett, the last Federal officer still inside the fort, saw the folly of staying to fight and ordered a general retreat. But, the order was not well understood or heard. Some fifty members of the 48th, along with a number of men from the other

regiments, remained behind. Around midnight, the Confederates completely surrounded the remaining force and all inside were captured. It was noted the next day that of the 140 men rounded up by the Rebels, each was a private soldier. Not one was an NCO or officer.<sup>20</sup>

The captured Federals were marched up to Cumming's Point the next morning and placed on a steamer. They were then taken around Fort Sumter to Charleston. Forced to march through the streets of the city en route to the jail, the captured soldiers were mocked and cursed by an infuriated mob of townspeople. General Beauregard summoned some of the prisoners to gather information about the forces he was facing. When he learned that among them were members of the 48th New York, he threatened to punish them for being a member of the regiment that had burned Bluffton.<sup>21</sup>

The assault itself had been a dismal failure. After enduring approximately four hours of an uncoordinated, disjointed Federal attack, the fort still remained squarely in Confederate hands. The death and carnage in and surrounding the fort, was shocking to all who had witnessed it. Bodies and human parts were strewn everywhere. Those few members of "Strong's Fighting Brigade" who had lived through the assault, made their way back to their lines during the dark, early-morning hours of the 19th. The men guarding the camps and maintaining the Federal lines were demoralized by the small numbers of their comrades who returned, as well as by the severity and extent of their injuries.

Of the 5,000 men involved in the assault, 1,515 Federal had become casualties. The Federals suffered 246 men killed, 880 wounded, and 389 captured. By comparison, the Confederate forces suffered only 221 casualties (see appendix B). It has been

estimated by survivors that of the nearly three thousand men of Strong's Brigade, approximately seven to eight hundred of them gained entrance to the fort, four to five hundred had fallen while inside, and one to two hundred had succeeded in making their escape back to Union lines.<sup>22</sup>

Casualties in the 48th New York were especially high. Of the eight companies, comprising 420 men committed to the assault, 54 of them had been killed, 112 had been wounded, and 76 were missing, for an aggregate of 242. Fourteen of the sixteen officers of the regiment who had gone into the fight were either dead, dying, wounded, and/or taken prisoner. Lieutenant Colonel Green, Captain Farrell, and Lieutenant Edwards had all been killed. Captains Paxson, Hurst, and Lieutenant Fox had all received mortal wounds. Paxson, one of the first to fall crossing the ditch of the fort, had received grievous wounds from canister to both his legs. He would be carried off to safety, only to die two weeks later from his injuries. Captain Hurst was captured by the Rebels and died thirteen days later in Charleston. Lieutenant Fox made it back to friendly lines, but died from his wounds on August 11th, 1863. Colonel Barton, Captains Lockwood, Elfwing, Swartwout, and Coan, and Lieutenants Miller, Barrett, Taylor, and Acker, were all wounded. Like Captain Hurst, Lieutenant Taylor had fallen into Rebel hands. However, Taylor would survive his injuries, and he would eventually be paroled by the Rebels and would return to the regiment.<sup>23</sup>

Casualties were also high among the other officers of the brigade. In fact, so many senior officers fell that night that command of the assault rapidly passed from every Federal colonel and lieutenant colonel present until it ultimately fell upon Major Plimpton of the Third New Hampshire. Generals Seymour and Strong were both

severely wounded, the latter dying twelve days later from tetanus, which was contracted via his thigh wound during a convalescence period in New York. Along with Colonel Shaw of the 54th, Colonels Putnam and Chatfield were also killed at the fort. Colonels Jackson and Emery were both wounded in the assault.<sup>24</sup>

Frustrated but undeterred, Gillmore returned to shelling the fortification, using artillery and naval gunfire to pound away at the fort for yet another planned assault. For the next seven weeks, using sap rollers and other defenses, the Federals zigzagged their trenches nearer to the fort. By September 6th, the Federals had reached the ditch of the redoubt--close enough to launch their assault. The Confederates, under strength and realizing their predicament, evacuated the fort late on the 6th. The Federal assault force, under the command of General Terry, gained unopposed entry into Fort Wagner and Battery Gregg the following day. Despite taking the bastions, the Federals were unable to capitalize further on their gain. Subsequent shelling of Fort Sumter and other defensive positions of the City of Charleston, including the city itself, did little to weaken the Confederates resolve or morale. The Federals would continue to bombard the region until February 1865, when, in the face of Union General William T. Sherman's approaching army, the remaining defenses and the city itself were evacuated.<sup>25</sup>

The 48th New York had suffered fifty-seven percent casualties during the July 18th assault on Fort Wagner alone. Such a high number of casualties prevented it from being an effective fighting force and, despite a day in the trenches following the assault, it now needed time to rest and refit. On July 22nd, the regiment received orders to transfer to Hilton Head, and thence to Florida. It embarked on the steamer *Mary Benton* and, after fighting many leaks and horrendously bad weather, put in to Hilton Head on

the 23rd. There, Major Strickland, who had been absent from the regiment on sick leave, rejoined the regiment and took command.

On July 31st, the 48th New York embarked again and reached St. Augustine, Florida, on the 2nd of August. It succeeded the 7th Connecticut there as the garrison of Fort Marion, just as it had with that regiment fifteen months earlier at Fort Pulaski. The men of the 48th New York now had time to reflect on their first two years of the war, which was most likely burned into their memories by a hell called Fort Wagner.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham J. Palmer, *The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers, In the War for the Union, 1861-1865* (Brooklyn: Veteran Association of the Regiment, 1885), 98; and Stephen R. Wise, *Gate of Hell* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 55, 64.

<sup>2</sup> Palmer, 78-80, 93; and Wise, 59, 61.

<sup>3</sup> Wise, 59-62.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 55, 63, 65; and Palmer 80.

<sup>5</sup> Wise, 65; and Palmer, 81.

<sup>6</sup> Wise, 65-67; and Palmer, 81-83.

<sup>7</sup> Wise, 67-70; and Palmer, 83-84.

<sup>8</sup> Wise, 69-70 ; and Palmer, 84-85.

<sup>9</sup> Wise, 70-71.

<sup>10</sup> Palmer, 84-85; Wise, 72-73; and Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (Albany, New York: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912), 2357.

<sup>11</sup> Wise, 73-78; and Palmer, 88-89, 96.

<sup>12</sup> Palmer, 93-94.

<sup>13</sup> Wise, 80-81, 91-95.

<sup>14</sup>Wise, 92-98.

<sup>15</sup> Frank J. Welcher, *The Union Army, 1861-1865, Organization and Operations*. Vol. 1, *The Eastern Theater* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 101-102; Palmer, 101; and Wise, 232-233.

<sup>16</sup>Wise, 101-105; and Palmer, 103-104, 108-109.

<sup>17</sup>Palmer, 102-111, 144-115; Wise 107-109; James M. Nichols, *Perry's Saints or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 169-170; and "Siege of Fort Wagner," *New York Herald*, July 31, 1863, 1.

<sup>18</sup>Palmer, 114; W. F. Beyer and O. F. Keydel, *Deeds of Valor, How America's Civil War Heroes Won the Congressional Medal of Honor*, (Stamford, Connecticut: Longmeadow Press, 1992), 260-261; and James M. Nichols, *Perry's Saints or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 169.

<sup>19</sup>Wise, 109, 112; and Palmer, 115-116.

<sup>20</sup>Wise, 109-112; and Palmer, 114-118.

<sup>21</sup>Palmer, 124.

<sup>22</sup>Wise, 113-114, 233-234; Palmer, 114; Nichols, 174; and Patricia L. Faust, *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 46.

<sup>23</sup>Wise, 114; Palmer, 112; and Nichols, 172-173.

<sup>24</sup>Wise, 114; and Palmer, 112.

<sup>25</sup>Faust, 46; and Wise, 195-204.

<sup>26</sup>Wise, 114; Palmer, 128-129; and Nichols, 178-179.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Our Colonel called for "Home, Sweet Home" from the band; and with the memories of the dear ones far away, and the unbidden tears stealing to our eyes as we thought of our Northern homes, we lifted our swords, presented our arms, and vowed that flag should never be dishonored.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Daniel C. Knowles, 48th New York  
*The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York  
State Volunteers, In the War for the Union, 1861-1865*

To the officers and men of the 48th New York, the war through July 1863 must have seemed a strange mixture of both boredom and sheer horror. Up to the time of the assaults on Morris Island and Fort Wagner, there had been little occasion for the unit to fight as a regiment. Yet, in a period of just nine days, the regiment had been reduced to a battalion--half its original size. The survivors of the attacks on Morris Island and Fort Wagner now had to struggle with the issues of reassembling their command, as well as its morale.

Two months of rest and refit in St. Augustine proved helpful to the regiment, and its subsequent postings to low threat camps and details around Beaufort, South Carolina, also aided in the unit's recovery. In November of 1863, Companies G and I, from Fort Pulaski and Tybee Island respectively, rejoined the regiment. Many of the wounded officers and men from Fort Wagner also rejoined the regiment in earnest about this time. Additionally, 156 new conscripts, sent from the North, and 150 men transferred from "Les Enfants Perdu," the New York Independent Battalion, joined the regiment. The addition of these men greatly strengthened the unit's number.<sup>2</sup>

In December of 1863, reenlistment of the regiment's veterans began. Despite having faced many tragedies and deprivations, nearly 300 men of the 48th took an oath to continue to fight for the Union cause. Still, the regiment would never be as formidable in size, nor as effective a fighting force, as it had been before the fights for Fort Wagner and Morris Island. The regiment would go on to fight for two more years, serving in many of the war's other campaigns--Olustee, Bermuda Hundred, Drewry's Bluff, Strawberry Plains, Chaffin's Farm, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Fort Fisher and Wilmington.<sup>3</sup>

But, despite serving with valor in these campaigns, the 48th's reputation would be inextricably linked to the failure at Fort Wagner. Yet, they had not failed in their duty. Although they were unwitting participants in a poorly led effort, they, nonetheless, accomplished everything they were tasked to do. They had borne the Confederate defenders' withering fire, breached Fort Wagner's defenses, and held a segment of the fort until reinforcements came up. Only one other regiment, the 6th Connecticut, could make that claim.

History has chosen to ignore this fact. Erroneously, though understandably, it has elected to highlight the brave, but less accomplished, deeds of the 54th Massachusetts. Such selective storytelling ill-serves the purpose of history. It has overshadowed the valor and sacrifices of other participating regiments, including the 48th New York. Author Abraham J. Palmer outlined this issue in his regimental history:

"I would not disparage the brave rush of that colored regiment to death. It has, however, received not undue, but disproportionate attention from historians."<sup>4</sup>

The officers and men of the 48th New York were among the finest soldiers who served the Union during the Civil War. Their heroic deeds during the campaign for



Charleston in the summer of 1863 rank among the noblest of the war and, despite their absence at more publicized campaigns, such as Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Chancellorsville and Chickamauga, they showed no less courage and gave no less effort than soldiers who fought at there. At Morris Island and Fort Wagner, the officers and men of "Perry's Saints" proved, by their valor and actions, that they were truly "men of glory."

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<sup>1</sup>Abraham J. Palmer, *The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers, In the War for the Union, 1861-1865* (Brooklyn: Veteran Association of the Regiment, 1885), 234.

<sup>2</sup>Palmer, 128-130; and James M. Nichols, *Perry's Saints or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in the War of the Rebellion* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1886), 188-189.

<sup>3</sup>Palmer, 130; and Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (Albany, New York: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912), 2357-2358.

<sup>4</sup>Nichols, 174-175; and Palmer, 104.

## ILLUSTRATIONS



Colonel James H. Perry  
First colonel of the 48th  
July 1861--June 1862

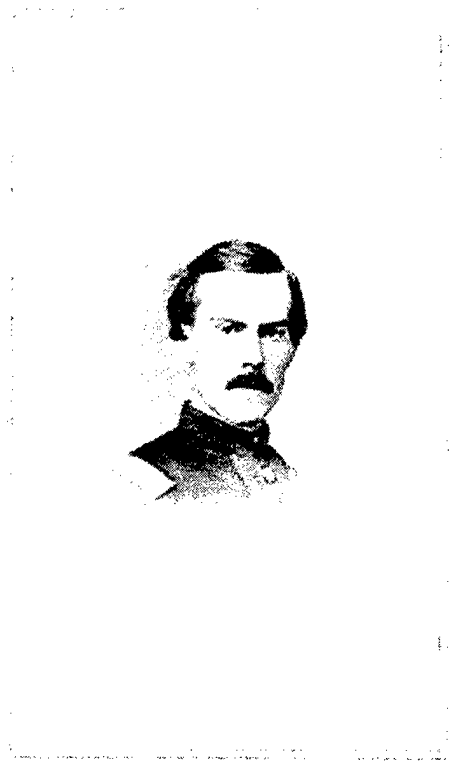


Colonel William B. Barton  
Second colonel of the 48th  
June 1862--December 1864

Figure 1. Images of the first two regimental commanders of the 48th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Reproduced from original carte de visites in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.

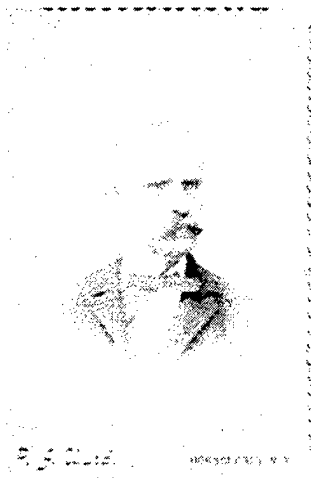


William H. Dunbar  
First Lt. & Captain  
Company A  
August 1861--May 1865



Anthony Elmendorf  
Captain  
Company G  
July 1861--April 1864

Figure 2. Images of Captains William H. Dunbar and Anthony Elmendorf of the 48th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Reproduced from original carte de visites in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.



Amasa B. White  
Horn Player  
Regimental Band  
September 1861--September 1862



Lorenzo E. Lyon  
Private, Corporal, Sergeant, 2nd Lieutenant  
Company F  
September 1861--May 1864



John Miniach  
Private  
Company I  
August 1861--December 1864

Figure 3. Bandsman Amasa B. White, Corporal Lorenzo E. Lyon, and Private John Miniach of the 48th New York Volunteers. Reproduced from original images in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.



Figure 4. Unidentified private soldiers of the 48th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Reproduced from original images in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.

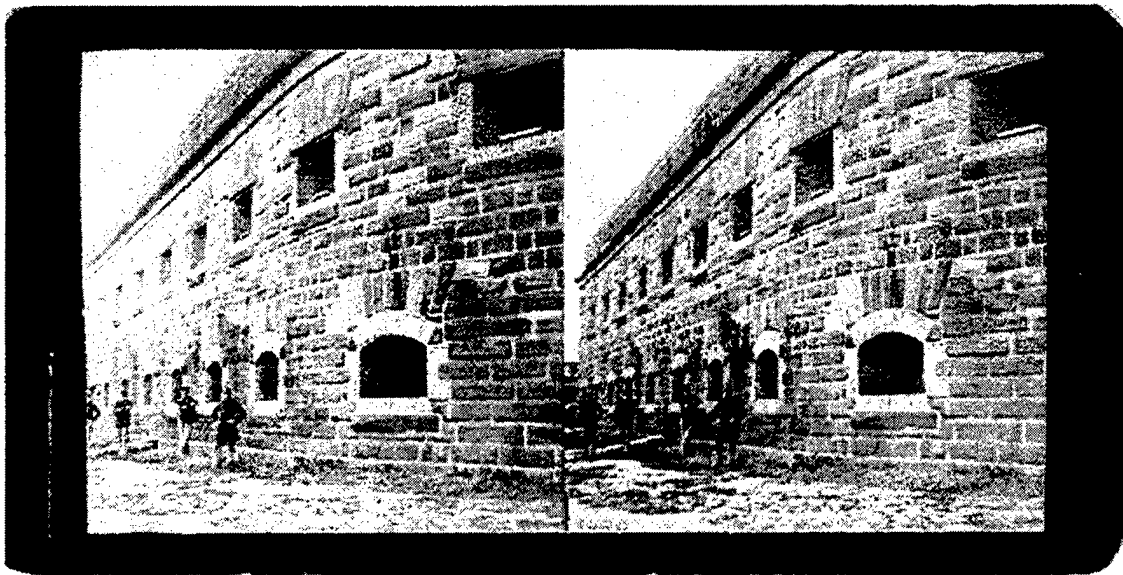


Figure 5. Stereographic photo of Fort Hamilton (Camp Wyman), New York during the American Civil War. Reproduced from original image in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.



Edwin D. Morgan  
Governor  
Major General--Dept. of New York  
1858-1863



Horatio Seymour  
Governor  
1852-1854, 1863-1865

Figure 6. Images of first two wartime governors of New York State (Final wartime governor Rueben E. Fenton not pictured). Reproduced from original carte de visites in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.

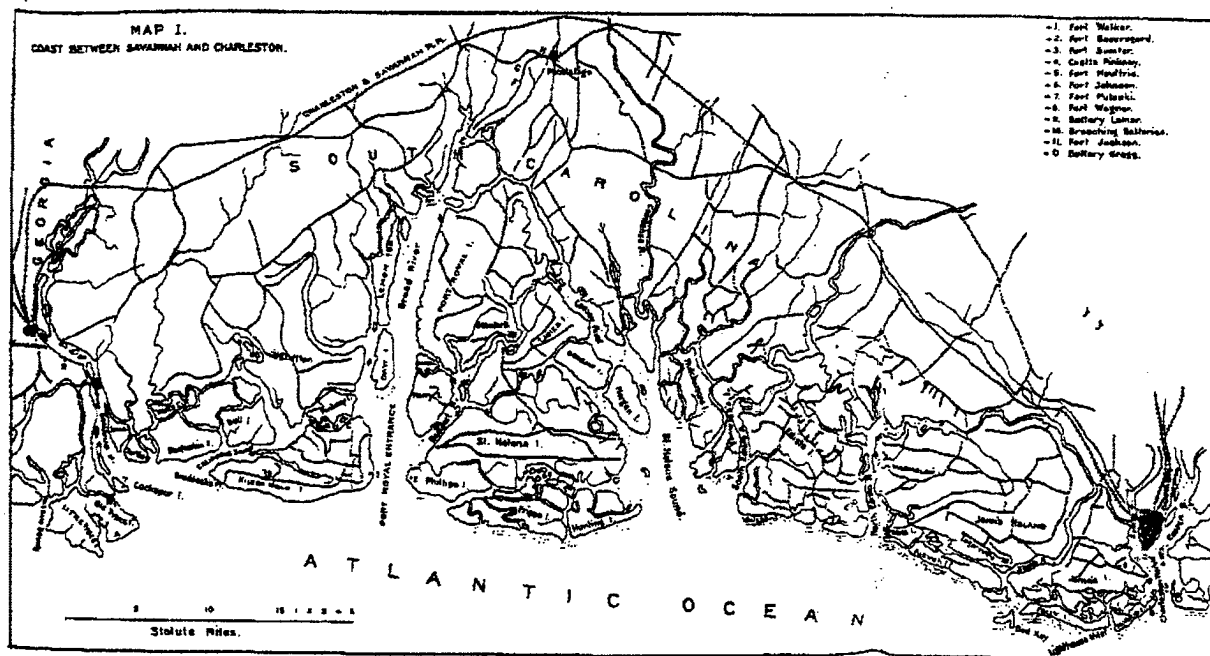


Figure 7. Civil War-era map of coastal region between Savannah and Charleston. Reproduced with permission from James W. Hagy, 1993, *To Take Charleston. The Civil War on Folly Island*, 20-21.

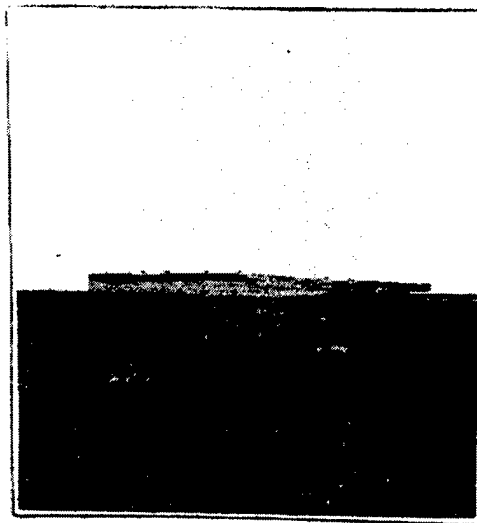




Figure 8. Wartime image of the Federal Pier at Hilton Head, South Carolina. The steamers *Ben De Ford* and *Fulton* can be seen at the end of the pier. Both steamers transported the 48th New York during the war. Reproduced from original photograph in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.



Front.



Front

Figure 9. Wartime images of Fort Pulaski, Georgia. Damage incurred from the April 11th, 1862 Federal bombardment of the fort can be clearly seen in the picture on the left. The picture on the right shows the fort after repairs were made by Federal troops following the bombardment. The majority of the repair was done by the men of the 48th New York. Reproduced from photographs in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.



Southwest angle of Fort Pulaski



Figure 10. Top Photo: 1863 image of the southwest angle of Fort Pulaski, looking west. An unknown vessel on the Savannah River can be seen in the background. Bottom Photo: The regimental band of the 48th New York. Reproduced from photographs in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.

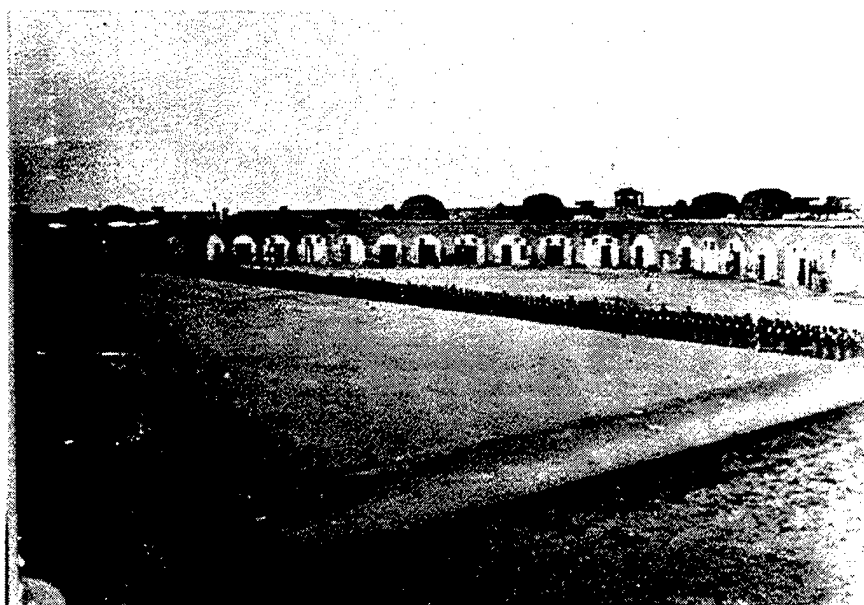
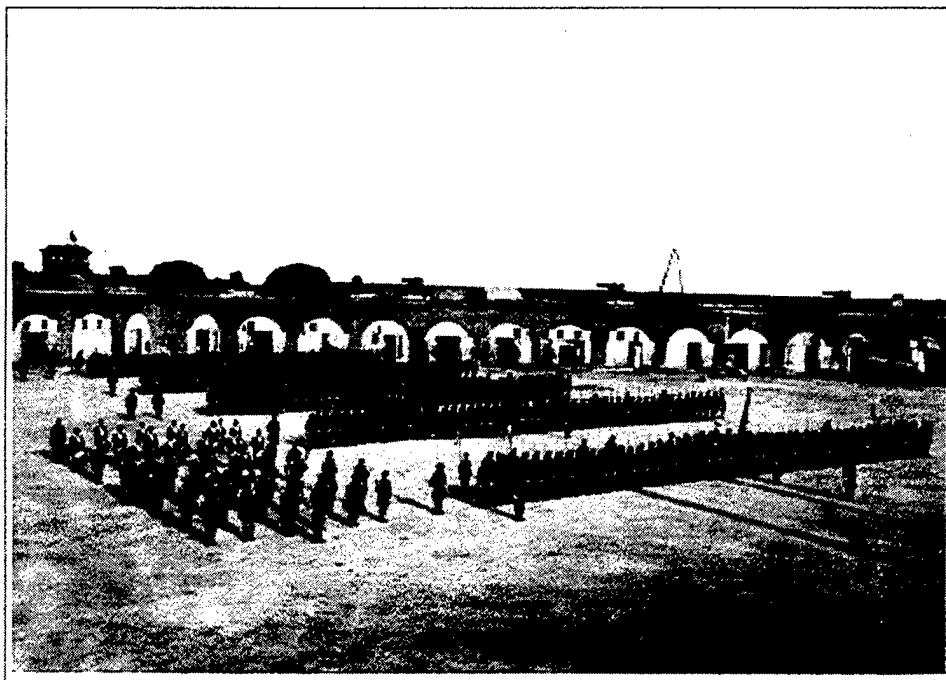


Figure 11. Two images of the 48th New York in formation at Fort Pulaski. Colonel Barton stands at the front of the formation in the top photo while Lieutenant Colonel Green stands between the first division and the band. The fort's signal station can be clearly seen atop the parapet in both photographs. Reproduced from photographs in the 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.

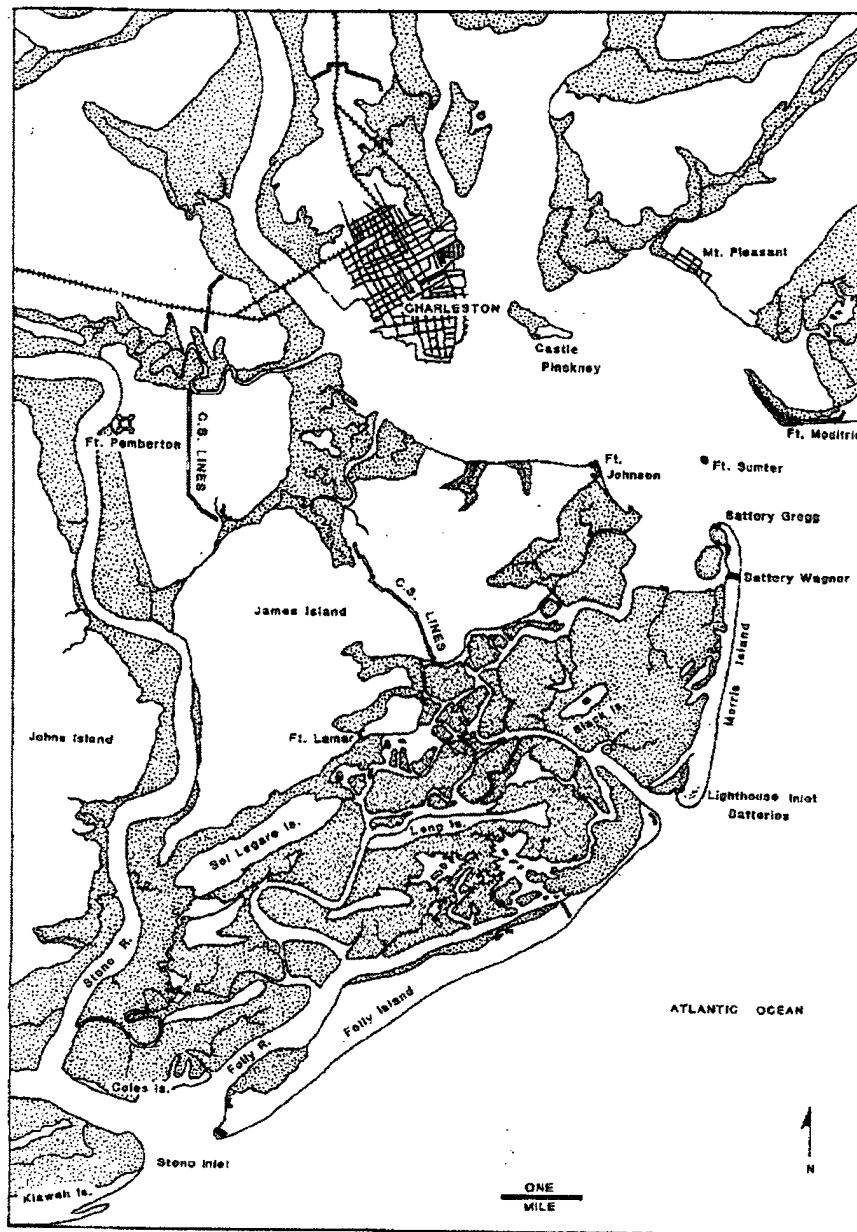


Figure 12. Map of the Charleston region in June of 1863. Confederate fortifications and lines of defense are clearly marked. Reproduced with permission from Stephen R. Wise, 1994, *Gate of Hell*, 24.



David Hunter  
Major General  
Mar.-Sept. 1862; Jan.-Jun. 63



John M. Brannan  
Brigadier General  
Sept. 1862; Oct. 1862-Jan. 1863



Ormsby M. Mitchell  
Major General  
Sept.-Oct. 1862



Quincy A. Gillmore  
Major General  
Jun. 1863-May 1864; Feb.-Jun. 1865

Figure 13. Commanding officers of the Department of the South during Federal actions against Charleston in 1862-1863. Reproduced from original carte de visites in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection.



Egbert L. Viele  
Brigadier General, USV  
1st Brigade Commander  
South Carolina Expeditionary Corps



Alfred H. Terry  
Major General, USV  
1st Division Commander  
James Island Diversion Force



Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard  
General, CSA  
Commanding, Dept. of SC, GA & FL



William B. Taliaferro  
Brigadier General, CSA  
Commander of Fort Wagner

Figure 14. Images of Brigadier General Egbert L. Viele, USV; Major General Alfred H. Terry, USV, General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, CSA and Brigadier General William B. Taliaferro, CSA. Image of Viele from original carte de visite in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection. Images of Terry, Beauregard and Taliaferro reproduced with permission from Stephen R. Wise, 1994, *Gate of Hell*.

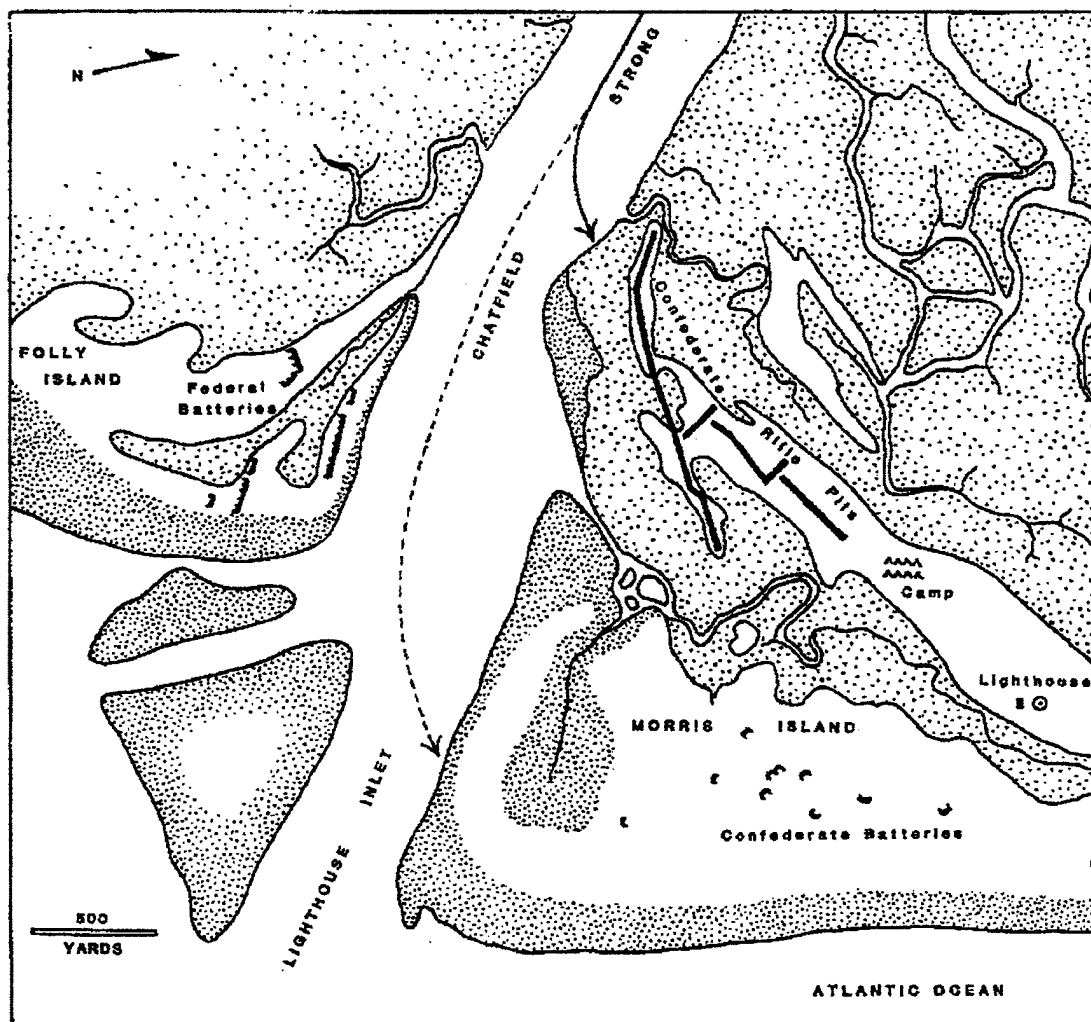


Figure 15. Assault on Morris Island, July 10th, 1863. Reproduced with permission from Stephen R. Wise, 1994, *Gate of Hell*, 69.



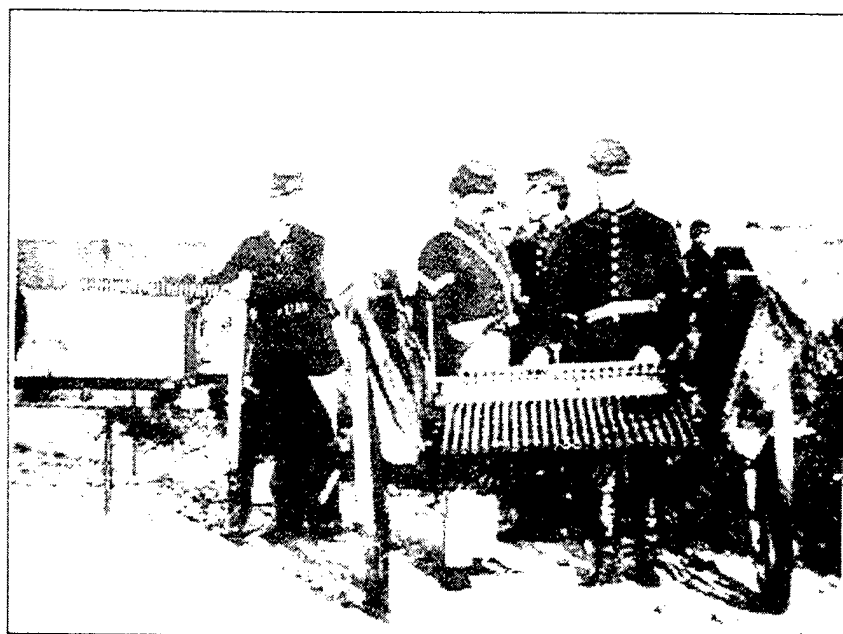
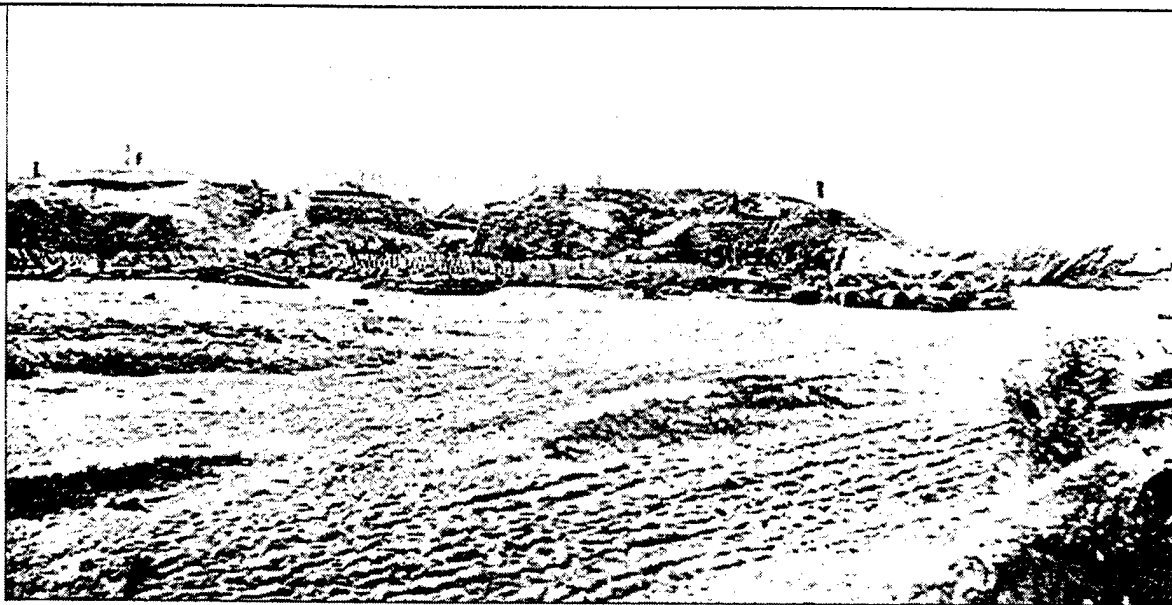


Figure 16. Top Photo: Battery Gregg on Cummings Point at the north end of Morris Island. Following its capture by the Federals in 1863, it would be renamed Fort Putnam. Bottom Photo: A Billinghamst-Requa gun, like the ones manned by the 48th New York during the fights for Morris Island. Reproduced with permission from Timothy E. Bradshaw, Jr., 1993, *Battery Wagner. The Siege, The Men Who Fought and the Casualties*, 77, 105.



Robert G. Shaw  
Colonel, USV  
54th Massachusetts Volunteers.



George C. Strong  
Brigadier General, USV  
1st Brigade Commander

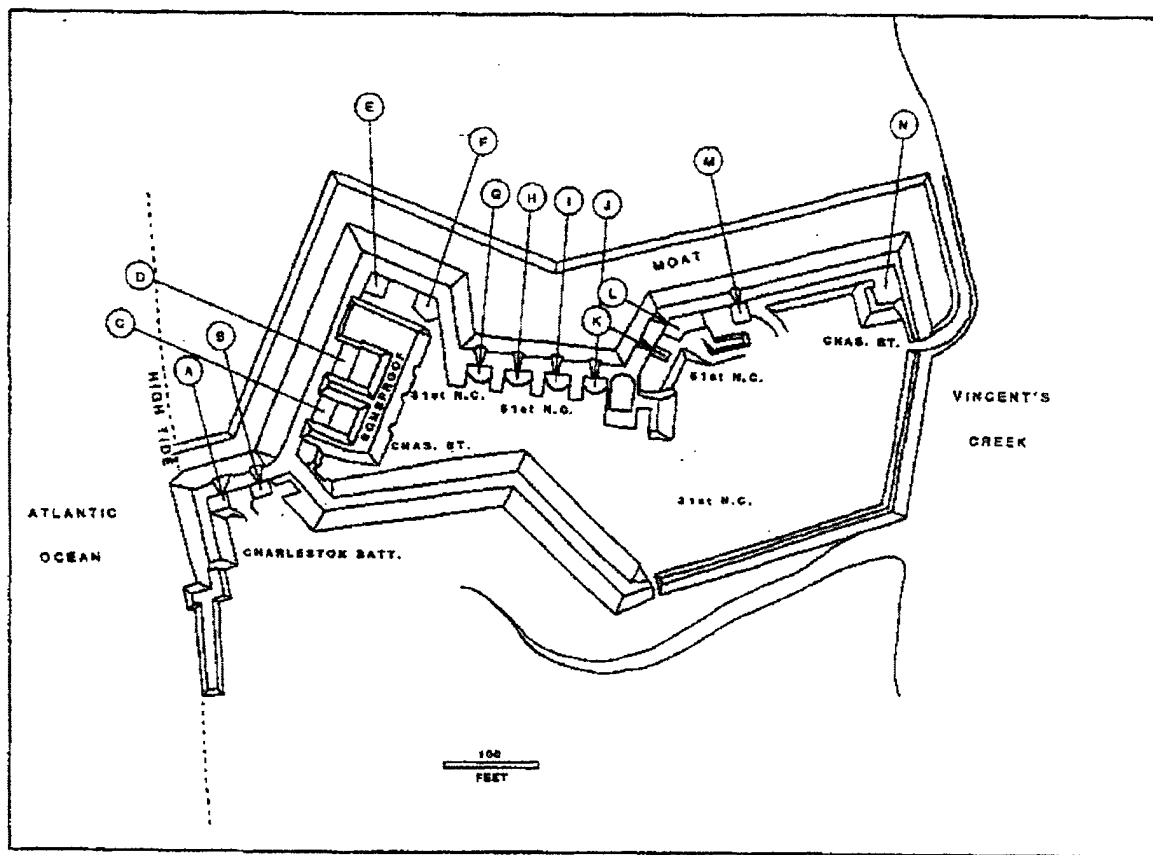


Haldimand S. Putnam  
Colonel, USV  
2nd Brigade Commander



Truman Seymour  
Brigadier General, USV  
2nd Division Commander

Figure 17. Key Federal commanders for the July 18th, 1863 assault on Fort Wagner. Image of Seymour reproduced from original carte de visite in 48th New York Papers, Luis M. Evans Collection. Images of Shaw, Strong, and Putnam reproduced with permission from Stephen R. Wise, 1994, *Gate of Hell*, following page 118.



- |                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| A: 12-pounder Howitzer      | H: 32-pounder Howitzer     |
| B: 12-pounder Howitzer      | I: 32-pounder Howitzer     |
| C: 10-inch Columbiad        | J: 8-inch Shell Gun        |
| D: 32-pounder               | K: 32-pounder Carronade    |
| E: 8-inch Seacoast Howitzer | L: 32-pounder Carronade    |
| F: 42-pounder Carronade     | M: 32-pounder Carronade    |
| G: 8-inch Shell Gun         | N: 10-inch Seacoast Mortar |

Figure 18. View of Fort Wagner and its defenses at the time of the Federal assault on July 18th, 1863. Reproduced with permission from Stephen R. Wise, 1994, *Gate of Hell*, 98.

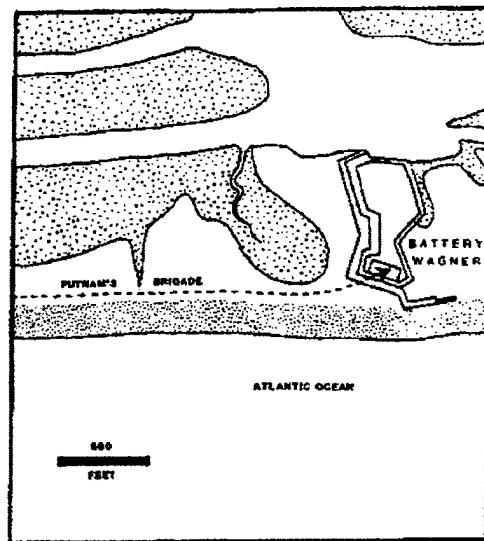
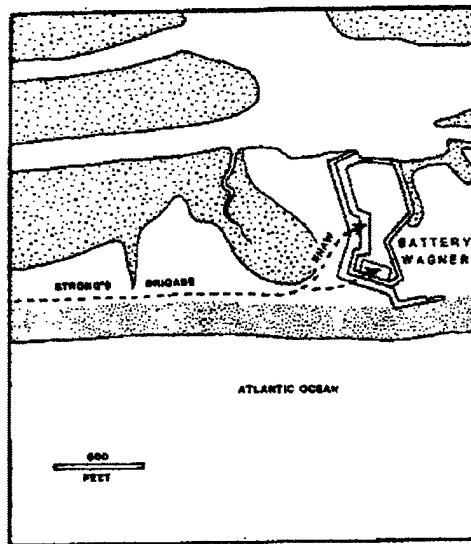


Figure 19. Assaults on Fort Wagner, July 18th, 1863. Top Photo: Path of attack by Strong's Brigade. The 54th Massachusetts struck the center of the Fort while the 48th New York and the 6th Connecticut attacked the seaward salient. The remaining regiments of the brigade--3rd New Hampshire, 9th Maine and 76th Pennsylvania, attacked the Fort's center after the first three had made their charge. Bottom Photo: Path of attack by Putnam's Brigade. The brigade immediately followed the 6th Connecticut and 48th New York onto the parapet, and their fire resulted in fratricide. Reproduced with permission from Stephen R. Wise, 1994, *Gate of Hell*, 105, 110.

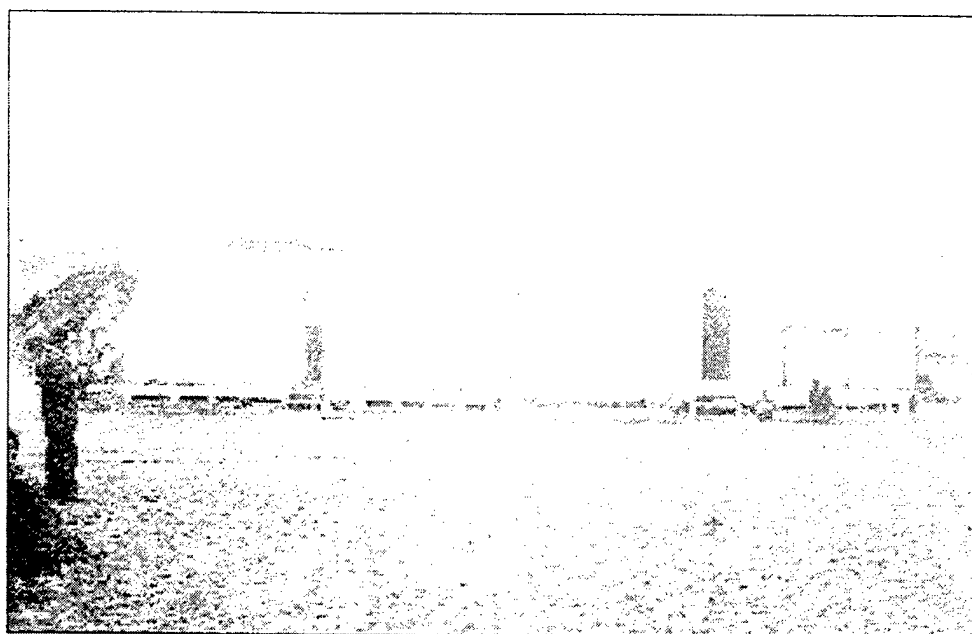
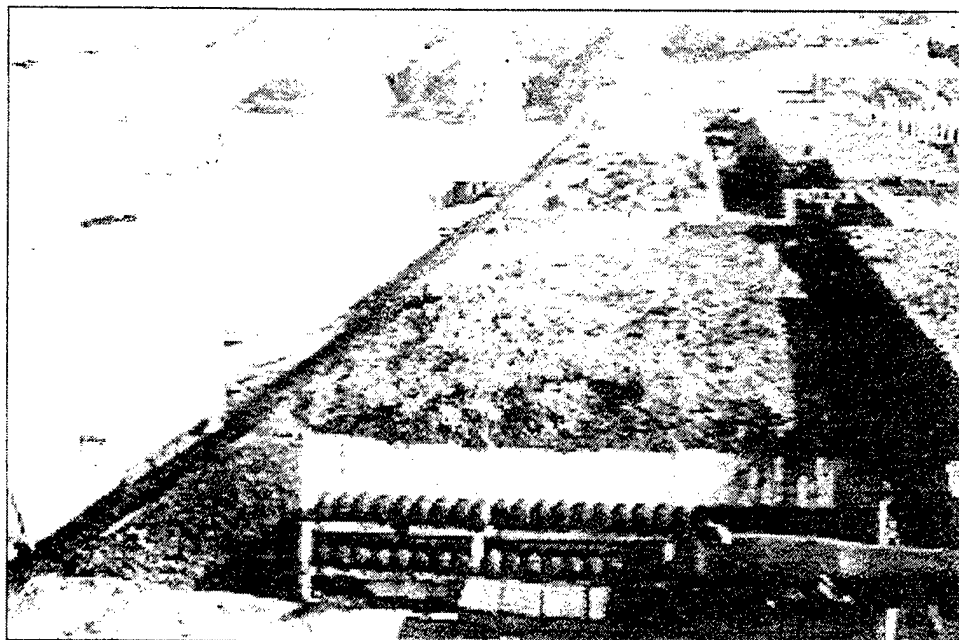


Figure 20. Interior views of Fort Wagner following the Federal occupation. Top photo: Shows reconstructed artillery positions and a repaired bomb proof near the center. This view looks south from where the assault on July 18th took place. Bottom Photo: Officers quarters inside Fort Wagner. Behind the two tents an artillery unit is shown at their guns. Reproduced with permission from Timothy E. Bradshaw, Jr., 1993, *Battery Wagner, The Siege, The Men Who Fought and the Casualties*, 111.

# APPENDIX A

## CASUALTY STATISTICS--MORRIS ISLAND, JULY 10th, 1863

### Union and Confederate Casualties:

	Estimated Strength	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
<i>Union</i>					
48th NY (Four Cos.) <sup>1</sup>	210	6	19	—	25
All other units <sup>2</sup> #	4,290	9	72	—	81
Total	4,500	15	91	—	106
<i>Confederate</i> <sup>3</sup>					
21st SC	615	14	112	56	182
1st SC Art. Co. I	60	*	*	*	38
Co. E	70	*	*	*	24
Co. H	90	*	*	*	21
1st SC Co. D	50	*	*	*	12
7th SC Battery	400	3	—	11	14
20th SC (Four Cos.)	285	—	—	—	0
Gist Guard Artillery	55	—	—	—	0
Mathewes' Artillery	55	—	—	—	0
Olmstead +	460	—	—	—	0
Couriers	26	—	—	—	0
Total	2,166	17	112	67	291

# There is no breakdown of the other Union casualties by separate units.

\* Unreported

+ Olmstead's command consisted of Companies G, H, I, and K of the 1st Georgia Infantry, Companies A, B, D, and F of the 12th Georgia Artillery Battalion, and three companies of the 18th Georgia Infantry Battalion under the command of Colonel Charles H. Olmstead.

<sup>1</sup>Abraham J. Palmer, *The History of the Forty-Eighth Regiment New York State Volunteers, In the War for the Union. 1861-1865* (Brooklyn: Veteran Association of the Regiment, 1885), 81, 86; Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865* (J.B. Lyon Company, 1912), 2357; and Stephen R. Wise, *Gate of Hell* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 69.

<sup>2</sup>*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*, hereafter referred to as *O. R. A.*, Series I, Vol. 28, 210-212; Wise, 228.

<sup>3</sup>Wise, 228.

# APPENDIX B

## CASUALTY STATISTICS--FORT WAGNER, JULY 18th, 1863

### Union and Confederate Casualties:

	Killed	Wounded	Missing	Total
<i>Union</i> <sup>1</sup>				
General officers	—	2	—	2
48th New York	54	112	76	242
54th Massachusetts	34	146	92	272
6th Connecticut	15	77	46	138
3rd New Hampshire	2	38	6	46
9th Maine	4	94	19	117
76th Pennsylvania	2	20	2	24
7th New Hampshire	41	119	56	216
100th New York	49	97	29	175
62nd Ohio	26	87	38	151
67th Ohio	19	82	25	126
3rd Rhode Island H.A. Battery C	—	1	—	1
3rd U.S. Artillery, Battery E	—	5	—	5
Total	246	880	389	1,515
<i>Confederate</i> <sup>2</sup>				
51st North Carolina	16	52	—	68
31st North Carolina	13	32	—	45
1st SC Artillery Co. A	*	*	*	5#
1st SC Cos. H & I	9	26	3	38
63rd GA Cos. B & K	4	10	—	14
Charleston Battalion	6	41	2	49
Palmetto Battalion	*	*	*	2#
Total	48	161	5	221

\* Unreported

# Not classified in report

<sup>1</sup>*Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*, hereafter referred to as *O. R. A.*, Series I, Vol. 28, 210-212.

<sup>2</sup>*O. R. A.*, Series I, Vol. 28, 406, 408; Stephen R. Wise, *Gate of Hell* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 233-234.



## GLOSSARY

**Blockade.** The investing of a coast by a hostile naval force with the intent to close it to maritime commerce. Legally, this is a military action conducted against lawful belligerents and acknowledges the rights of an independent power.

**Canister.** A form of case shot where ball projectiles are placed in a thin walled, cylindrical container that disintegrates upon firing. This creates a giant shotgun effect.

**Carronade.** A particular piece of artillery designed for use on ships. Originally cast in Carron, Scotland, the gun fired a large ball at low velocity which made it particularly effective against wooden hulls.

**Chevaux-de-frise.** A defensive obstruction placed to impede the forward progress of infantry. Normally consisted of a long log with long thin spikes run through at right angles.

**Ditch.** An obstruction normally placed in front of a parapet to impede an enemy's advance. When the parapet is made of earth, the ditch usually furnishes the material for its construction.

**Enfilading Fire.** A realm of fire that allows an attacking force to effectively fire in a straight line throughout a whole body of men.

**Grape Shot.** Similar to canister except that it utilizes larger ball projectiles.

**Gunboat.** Technically any armed vessel that was not a ship of the line, a frigate, or a sloop was a gunboat. The term, as it was used during the Civil War is broad. It includes ocean-going sailing ships and steamers, which, though small, could weather high seas and remain at sea for months. It also includes such ships as the Confederate ironclads and Union monitors which had the characteristic V-hull of an ocean going vessel, but had such a low freeboard that they could not stray far from the shelter of a friendly harbor. Finally, the term "gunboat" also includes all of the flat-bottomed armed riverboats, which spent their entire careers, a stone's throw from dry land.

**Ironclad.** A boat or ship armored to a substantial degree with iron plate.

**Monitor.** A class of vessels named after the first of their kind. Monitors were armored vessels with a low freeboard, shallow draft, and one or more revolving turret(s). Thirty monitors (including seven river monitors) entered service during the war.

**Muzzle.** The "opening" of a cannon.

Parapet. A breast-high wall or rampart utilized to protect troops from fire.

Pickets. A military guard positioned in front of a main body of troops to sound the alert of an approaching enemy.

Salient. The portion of a fort or a defensive position that extends furthest toward the enemy.

Shell. A hollow projectile for cannon with an explosive charge, set to explode in flight, on impact, or after penetration of an object.

Strategy. The science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war.

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